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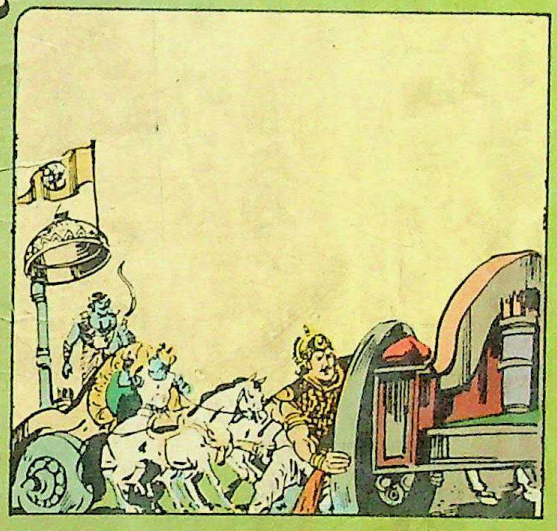
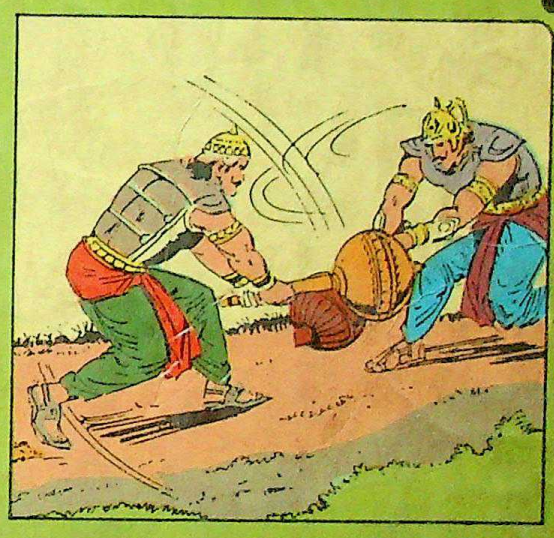
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

MAHABHARATA

THE VICTORIOUS PANDAVAS

• KARNA IN COMMAND • THE KURUS ROUTED • AFTER THE WAR





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THE VICTORIOUS PANDAVAS

Veda Vyasa's epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice) conducted by King Janamejaya, the great grandson of Vyasa.

In our earlier volumes of the Mahabharata were described the growing animosity between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, the game of dice which led to the banishment of the Pandavas to the forest, the thirteen years spent in exile by the Pandavas and the confrontation of the rivals on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Also narrated was the detailed account of each day of the battle till the fifteenth day when Drona was tricked into laying down his arms.

The following three volumes describe the appointment of Karna as commander of the Kauravas, his duel with Arjuna, Duryodhana's mace fight with Bheema, as well as the attack by Ashwatthama on the Pandava camp at night.

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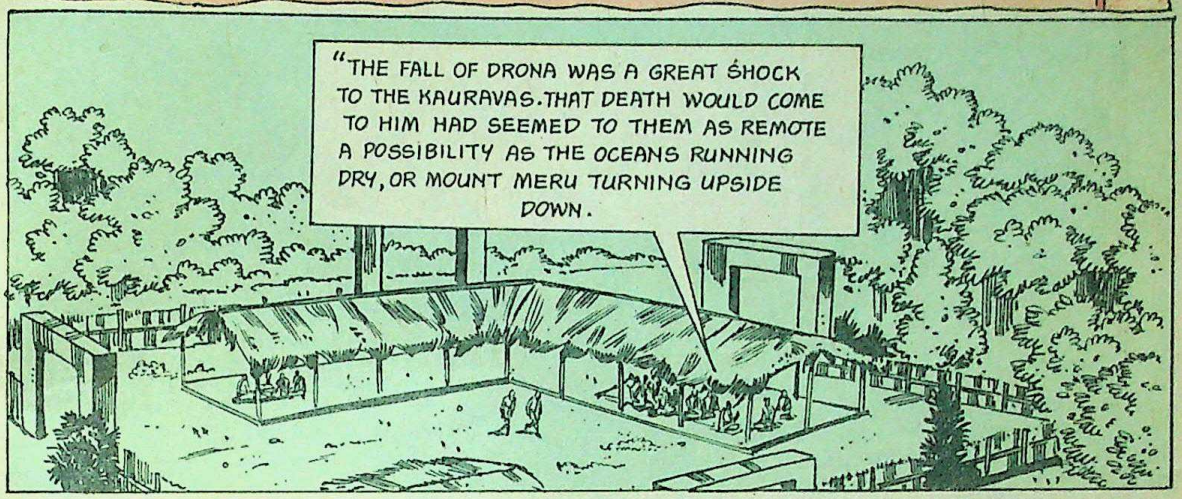
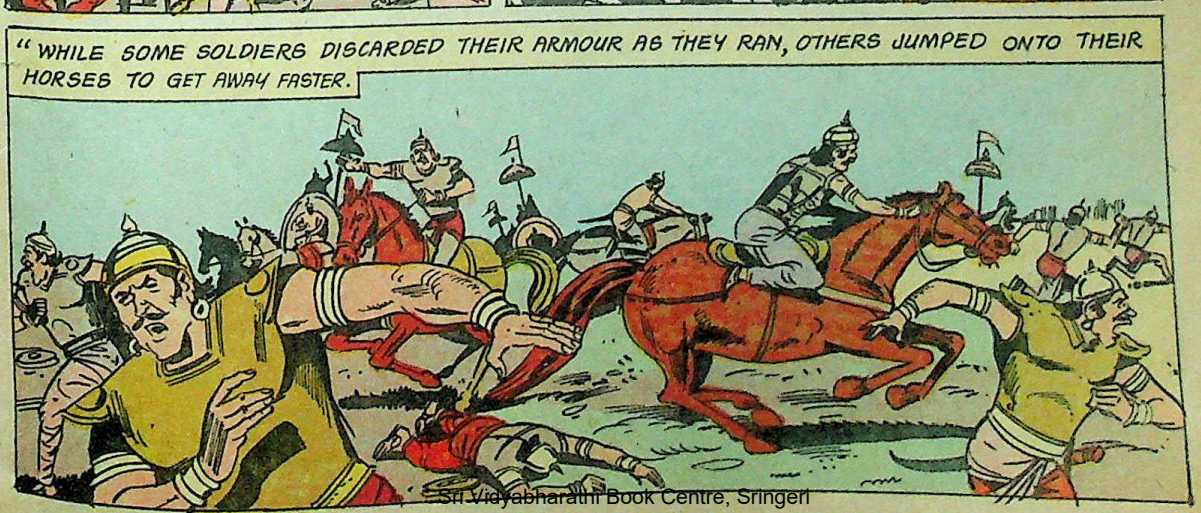
Mahabharata - 37

KARNA IN COMMAND





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"IN THE MIDST OF THE PANIC AND THE CONFUSION ASHWATTHAMA ADVANCED WITH HIS FORCES.

"SURPRISED TO SEE THE ARMY ON THE RUN, HE ASKED DURYODHANA —

WHY ARE THEY FLEEING? WHY DO NOT YOU STOP THEM?

O KING! HAS ANY LION-HEARTED WARRIOR FALLEN? IS THAT WHY THEY ARE FILLED WITH FEAR? TELL ME.

"DURYODHANA COULD NOT BEAR TO TELL HIM. WITH HESITATION, HE ASKED KRIPACHARYA TO SPEAK TO ASHWATTHAMA.

GURUDEVA, PLEASE TELL HIM THE NEWS.

"IN A PAINED VOICE KRIPACHARYA RELATED THE EVENTS TO ASHWATTHAMA.

...AND SO, ON CONFIRMING THE NEWS OF YOUR DEATH FROM THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA, DRONA LAID DOWN HIS WEAPONS...

...AND DHRISHTADYUMNA SEIZED THE CHANCE TO KILL HIM.

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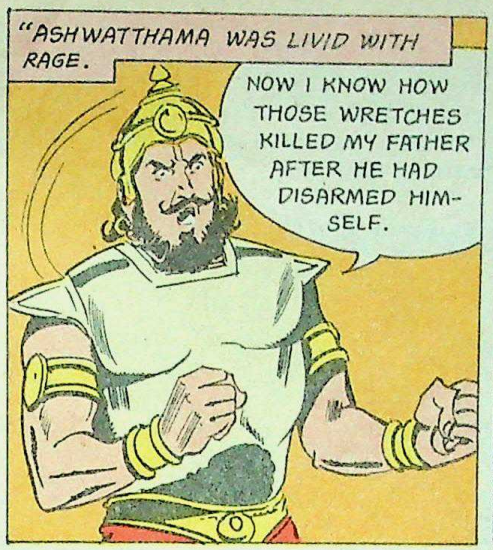

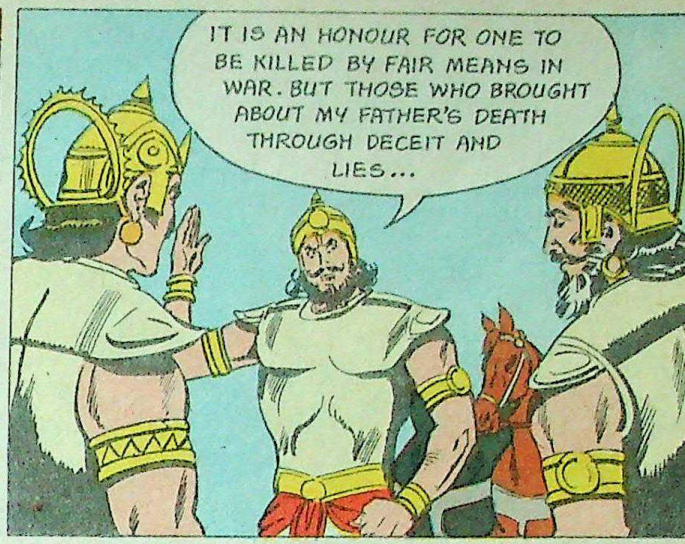

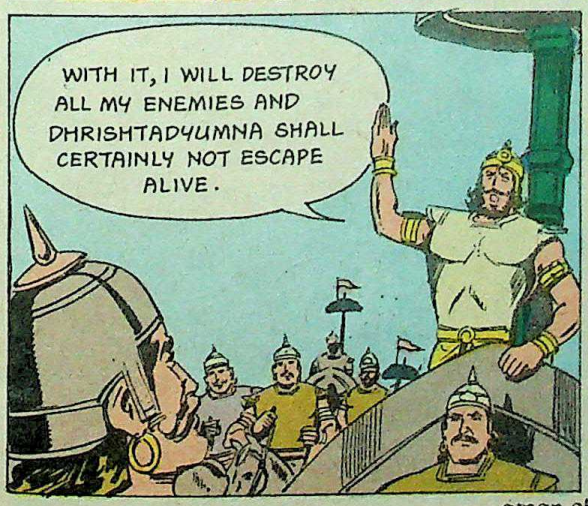

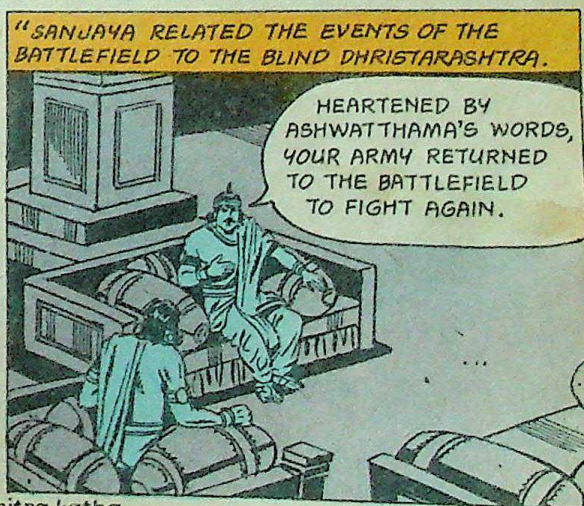

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"THE TUMULT OF CONCH SHELLS AND TRUMPETS HERALDING THE APPROACH OF THE KAURAVAS, INFUSED WITH ENTHUSIASM AGAIN, TOOK THE PANDAVAS BY SURPRISE.

"YUDHISHTHIRA ASKED ARJUNA —

DISHEARTENED BY DRONA'S DEATH, THE KAURAVAS HAD FLED. BUT NOW THEY APPEAR TO BE RETURNING TO FIGHT.

WHO COULD BE LEADING THEM BACK TO BATTLE? WHOSE LION ROAR DO WE HEAR?

"ARJUNA RESPONDED.

SURELY THAT IS ASHWATTHAMA'S CRY AS HE COMES TO AVENGE HIS FATHER'S DEATH. WHO CAN SAVE DHRISHTADYUMNA TODAY FROM THE VALOROUS ASHWATTHAMA?

YOU TOO ARE GUILTY, O KING, FOR HAVING DECEIVED DRONA WITH YOUR ONE LIE.

OH! WE MUST BE ALL GETTING OLD AND SENILE TO HAVE BEHAVED AS WE DID.

OUR GREED FOR A KINGDOM LED US TO THE THREEFOLD SIN OF KILLING DRONA WHO WAS A BRAHMANA, OUR ELDER AND OUR GURU. OH! I SHOULD DIE OF SHAME NOW.

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"ALL THE PANDAVAS WERE DUMBSTRUCK AT ARJUNA'S OUTBURST. THEN BHEEMA SPOKE UP.

AH! MY RIGHTEOUS BROTHER! YOU SOUND LIKE A BRAHMANA GIVING A DISCOURSE. BUT AS A TRUE-BLOODED KSHATRIYA, THESE WORDS ILL BECOME YOU.

"ANGER WAS EVIDENT IN WHAT BHEEMA SAID.

WAS NOT OUR KINGDOM SEIZED BY UNFAIR MEANS? WAS IT JUSTICE TO BANISH US TO THE FOREST FOR THIRTEEN LONG YEARS? IT WAS YOU WHO SAID WE MUST WAGE WAR WITH THE KAURAVAS.

ALL THESE YEARS, WE HELD OUR ANGER IN CHECK BECAUSE YUDHISHTHIRA INSISTED THAT WE WAIT TILL OUR EXILE WAS OVER. THE VERY SAME YUDHISHTHIRA, WHOM YOU NOW CHOOSE TO FIND FAULT WITH.

AND TO TOP IT ALL, A WARRIOR OF YOUR STATURE PRAISES ASHWATTHAMA THUS! WHY, ARMED WITH MY MACE, I CAN DEAL WITH HIM ALL BY MYSELF.

"DHRISHTADYUMNA SAID —

ARJUNA, YOU ARE FULL OF PRAISE FOR DRONA NOW. BUT YOU FORGET DRONA HAD FORSAKEN HIS DHARMA AS A BRAHMANA. HE PERFORMED NONE OF THE DUTIES* EXPECTED OF A BRAHMANA.

WAS IT FAIR ON HIS PART TO USE DIVINE WEAPONS ON HELPLESS SOLDIERS?

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* ASSISTING IN SACRIFICES, PERFORMING SACRIFICES, GIVING AWAY GIFTS, RECEIVING GIFTS, TEACHING AND STUDYING.

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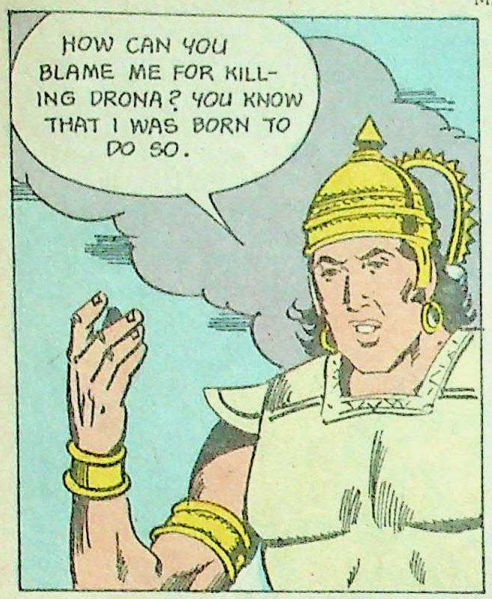

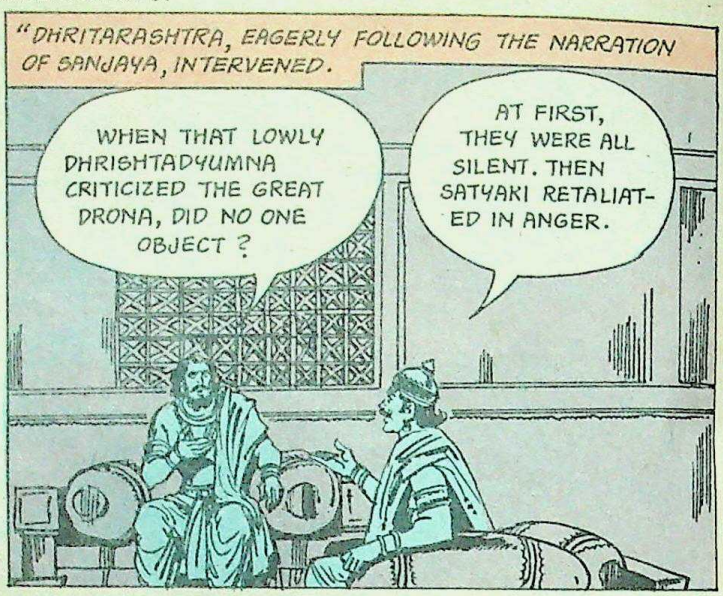

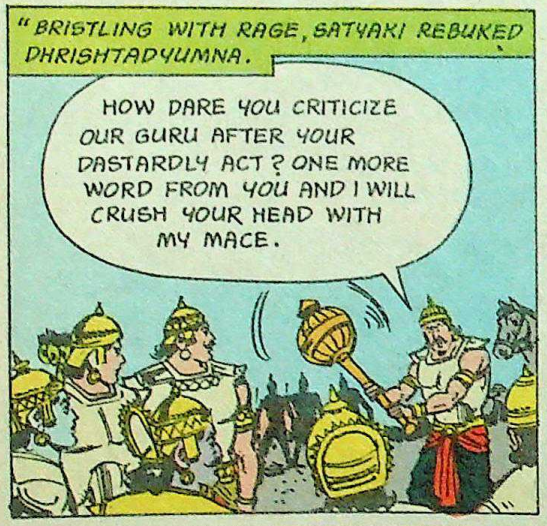

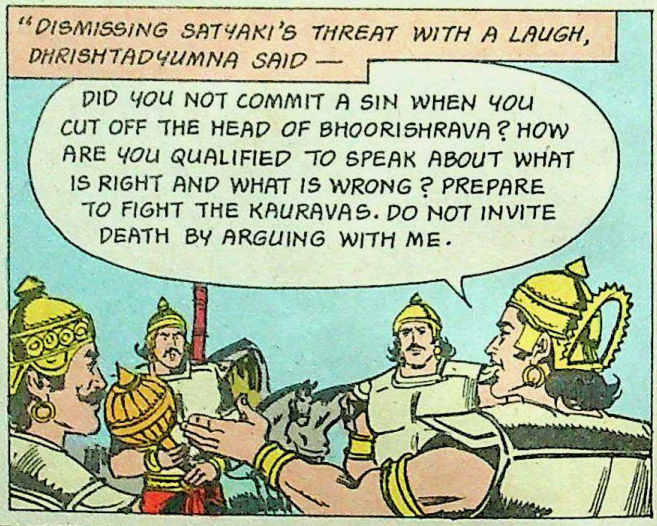

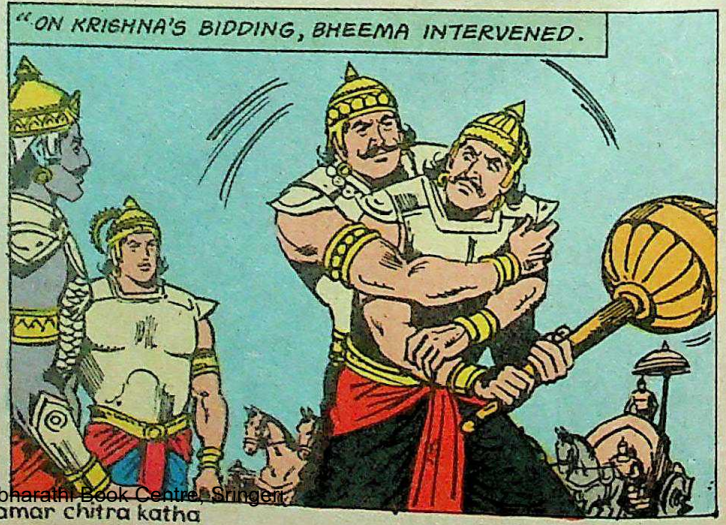

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"SAHADEVA ADDRESSED THE TWO HEROES—

COME! SHED YOUR ANGER AND FORGIVE EACH OTHER.

"KRISHNA AND YUDHISHTHIRA FINALLY MANAGED TO PACIFY THE TWO AND THE PANDAVAS PREPARED TO CONFRONT THE ENEMY AGAIN.

"LIKE TWO COLOSSAL MOUNTAINS IN COLLISION, THE TWO ARMIES CHARGED TOWARDS EACH OTHER.

"JUST THEN ASHWATTHAMA INVOKED THE NARAYANASTRA.

"THOUSANDS OF ARROWS SPRANG FORTH FROM THE WEAPON AND CLOUDED THE SKY.

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"EVEN AS THE ARROWS FELL ON THE PANDAVAS LIKE GLOWING SERPENTS, MANY A RADIANT DISC APPEARED IN THE SKY.

"STRANGE AND OMINOUS-LOOKING WEAPONS FOLLOWED. THE MORE THE PANDAVA FORCES OPPOSED IT, THE MORE POWERFUL THE ASTRA BECAME.

"SEEING HIS TROOPS BEING DECIMATED BY THE NARAYANASTRA, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

DHRISHTADYUMNA! TAKE THE PANCHALA ARMY AND FLEE! SATYAKI, YOU TOO GO HOME.

"ADDRESSING THE SOLDIERS, HE SAID —

DESIST FROM FIGHTING, I TOO WILL ENTER THE FIRE AND END MY LIFE.

"JUST THEN, KRISHNA SIGNALLED TO THE PANDAVA FORCES.

BRAVE WARRIORS, ALIGHT FROM YOUR VEHICLES AND THROW YOUR WEAPONS DOWN! THE ONLY WAY TO ESCAPE THE FURY OF THIS CELESTIAL WEAPON IS TO STAND UNARMED ON THE GROUND.

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"AS THE WARRIORS DISMOUNTED, KRISHNA EXPLAINED—

THE MORE YOU OPPOSE IT, THE MORE POWERFUL THE ASTRA WILL BECOME. YOU MUST INSTEAD BOW BEFORE ITS MIGHT.

"THUS DIRECTED BY KRISHNA, THE PANDAVA WARRIORS GOT READY TO RENOUNCE THE WEAPONS AND EVEN THE VERY THOUGHT OF THEM.

"BHEEMA ALONE WAS DEFIANT.

LIKE THE SUN, I STAND UNEQUALLED. I WILL OPPOSE THE NARAYANASTRA EVEN IF NO ONE HAS DONE SO BEFORE.

"AS HE SET FORTH ON HIS CHARIOT TOWARDS ASHWATTHAMA, THE KAURAVAS PELTED HIM WITH ARROWS.

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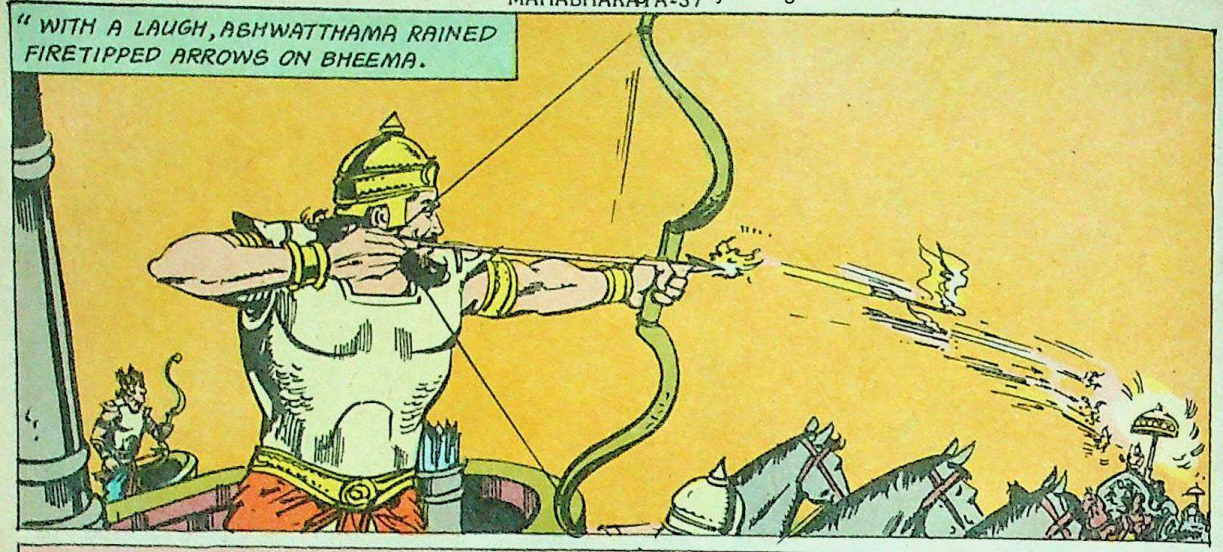
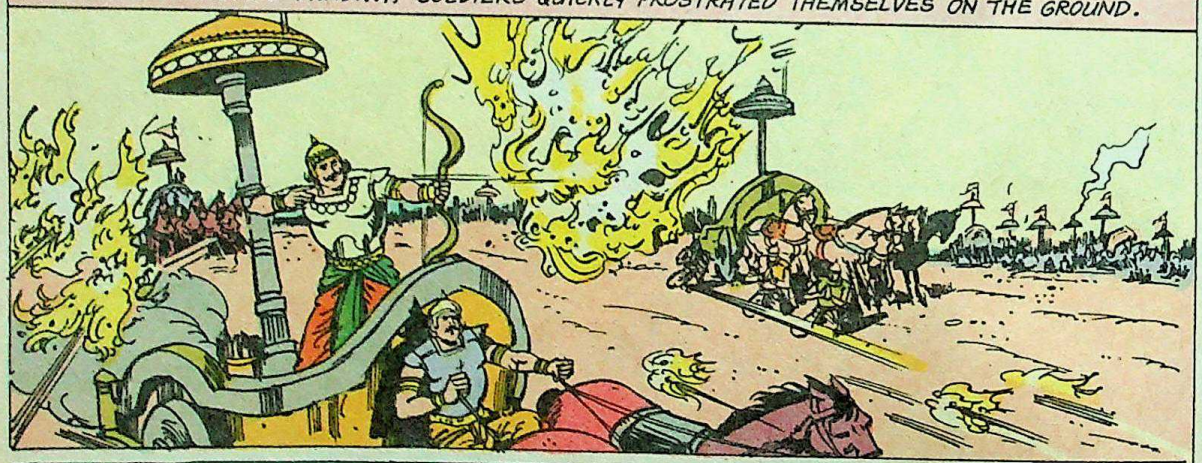
"WITH A LAUGH, ASHWATTHAMA RAINED FIRETIPPED ARROWS ON BHEEMA.

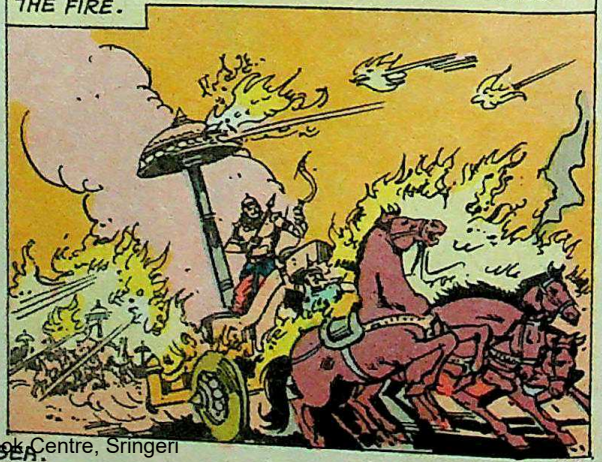


"BHEEMA RESEMBLED A MIGHTY MOUNTAIN COVERED WITH FIRE-FLIES. WHEN HE TRIED TO COUNTER ASHWATTHAMA'S ATTACK WITH HIS OWN ARROWS, THE SPARKLES TURNED TO A FLAMING FIRE. AT THIS THE FRIGHTENED PANDAVA SOLDIERS QUICKLY PROSTRATED THEMSELVES ON THE GROUND.



"WHEN THEY BECAME INACTIVE, THE BRUNT OF THE NARAYANASTRA FELL ON BHEEMA.

"NOW HIS CHARIOT, CHARIOTEER AND HORSES WERE ALL ENVELOPED IN FLAMES. EVEN ARJUNA'S VARUNASTRA* WAS INEFFECTIVE IN QUENCHING THE FIRE.



* CELESTIAL WEAPON OF VARUNA, LORD OF THE SEA.

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"ASHWATTHAMA REPLIED WITH A DEEP SIGH—

ALAS! NEITHER DOES THIS WEAPON RETURN NOR CAN IT BE INVOKED AGAIN. IF I TRY TO RECALL IT, IT WILL CERTAINLY DESTROY US.

HAD KRISHNA NOT DISCLOSED THE SECRET OF QUELLING THE NARAYANASTRA, WE WOULD HAVE DESTROYED ALL OUR ENEMIES TODAY.

THEN USE THE OTHER CELESTIAL WEAPONS AT YOUR DISPOSAL.

"ASHWATTHAMA SET OUT TO ATTACK DHRISHTADYUMNA.

"WITH TWENTY-FIVE PIERCING ARROWS, HE WOUNDED DHRISHTADYUMNA.

"ON RECOVERING, DHRISHTADYUMNA RAINED COUNTLESS ARROWS IN RETURN.

"BUT NOT FOR LONG. SOON ASHWATTHAMA KILLED HIS HORSES AND CHARIOTEER.

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"LAUGHING ASHWATTHAMA WARNED SATYAKI —

I KNOW YOU HAVE A SOFT CORNER FOR DHRISHTADYUMNA. BUT TODAY NEITHER OF YOU WILL ESCAPE ME.

"SEEING SATYAKI BEING THUS TORMENTED, FIVE MIGHTY PANDAVA WARRIORS CAME TO HIS AID.

"BHEEMA AND ASHWATTHAMA WERE SOON ENGAGED IN WELL-MATCHED BATTLE.

"ASHWATTHAMA INJURED BHEEMA'S CHARIOTEER. RELEASED FROM THE REINS, HIS HORSES TOOK BHEEMA AWAY.

"ARJUNA HAILED ASHWATTHAMA —

LET ME SEE YOUR VALOUR, YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR PROWESS. COME! DISPLAY YOUR LOVE OF THE KAURAVAS AND YOUR HATRED FOR US. TODAY, I WILL CRUSH YOUR PRIDE.

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"DHRITARASHTRA WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR THIS. HE INTERRUPTED SANJAYA'S NARRATION.

BUT ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA HAD ALWAYS BEEN FRIENDS. WHY WAS ARJUNA SO RUDE TO HIM ?

HE WAS DEEPLY HURT BY THE CRITICISM HURLED AT HIM, THE DEFEAT OF BHEEMA, SATYAKI AND DHRISHTADYUMNA HAD ALSO MADE HIM UNHAPPY.

"ASHWATTHAMA TOOK UP ARJUNA'S CHALLENGE.

"IMPATIENT TO KILL ARJUNA, HE INVOKED THE AGNEYASTRA.*

"NO SOONER HAD THE CELESTIAL WEAPON BEEN RELEASED THAN THE SKY RAINED DOWN ARROWS AND METEORS AND FLAMES OF FIRE ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD WHICH WAS SUDDENLY PLUNGED IN DARKNESS.

"ARJUNA THEN USED THE BRAHMASTRA WHICH SUBDUES THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPONS.

* CELESTIAL WEAPON BELONGING TO AGNI, LORD OF FIRE.

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"COUNTERED BY THE BRAHMASTRA, THE DARKNESS LIFTED AND THE AIR COOLED DOWN. THE DEVASTATING EFFECT OF THE AGNEYASTRA ON THE PANDAVA FORCES NOW BECAME VISIBLE.

" BUT ARJUNA AND KRISHNA ESCAPED UNSCATHED. THIS PLUNGED ASHWATTHAMA IN A GLOOM OF DESPAIR.

"THROWING AWAY HIS BOW HE JUMPED OFF HIS CHARIOT.

SHAME ON ME! ALL MY EFFORTS ARE FUTILE.

"AS HE WAS RUNNING OFF THE BATTLEFIELD FULL OF DESPAIR, HE CAME ACROSS SAGE VYASA.

OH, WISE ONE! WHERE DID I GO WRONG? WHY DID THE WEAPON FAIL ME?

"POURING OUT HIS WOE, HE CONTINUED—

HOW COULD SUCH A POWERFUL WEAPON BE QUELLED? HOW COME ARJUNA AND KRISHNA ALWAYS MANAGE TO ESCAPE?

BECAUSE MY SON, YOU USED THE WEAPON AGAINST KRISHNA WHO IS AN INCARNATION OF VISHNU.*

"ON HEARING THIS, ASHWATTHAMA BADE HIS ARMY TO GO BACK TO THE CAMP.

16 * SEE DASHAVATARA

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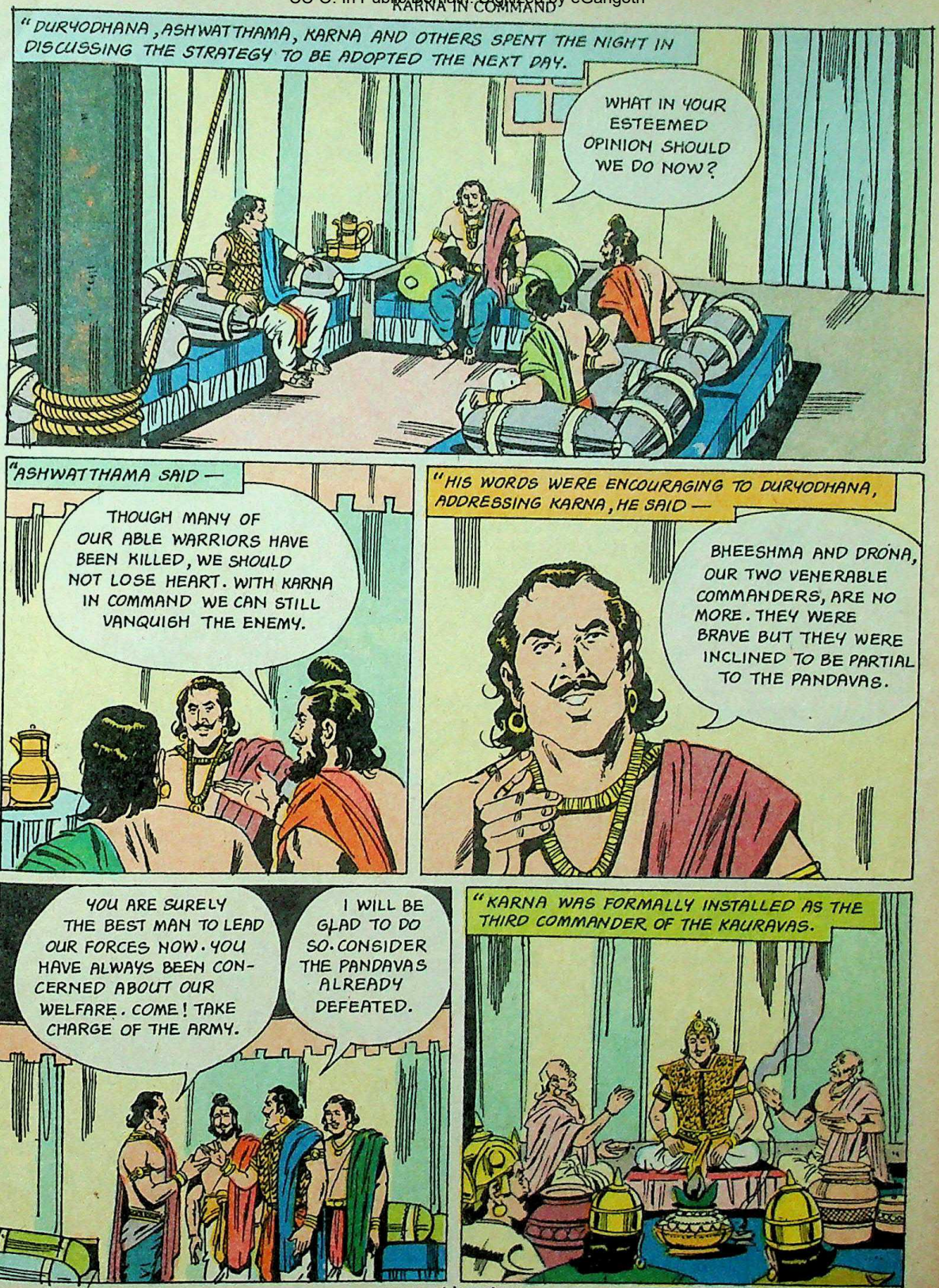

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"ON THE MORNING OF THE SIXTEENTH DAY, THE KAURAVA CAMP RESOUNDED WITH THE VOICE OF KARNA. HE ARRANGED THE FORCES IN THE MAKARA VYUHA.*

COME ON, MY BRAVES! GET READY TO FIGHT.

"THE INSTRUCTIONS HE GAVE WERE VERY CLEAR.

I SHALL BE AT THE MOUTH OF THE VYUHA, SHAKUNI AND ULOOKA WILL BE THE EYES. ASHWATTHAMA, YOU BE AT THE HEAD. DURYODHANA SHOULD BE PLACED IN THE CENTRE SURROUNDED BY HIS ARMY.

"YUDHISHTHIRA REMARKED TO ARJUNA —

ARJUNA, BEHOLD THE KAURAVAS BEREFT OF THEIR MIGHTY WARRIORS. KARNA IS THE ONLY HERO LEFT.

TODAY IT MUST BE YOUR AIM TO KILL HIM. ARRANGE OUR FORCES ACCORDINGLY.

I WILL ARRANGE OUR MEN IN THE SHAPE OF A CRESCENT.

* ARMY ARRAYED IN THE SHAPE OF CROCODILE.

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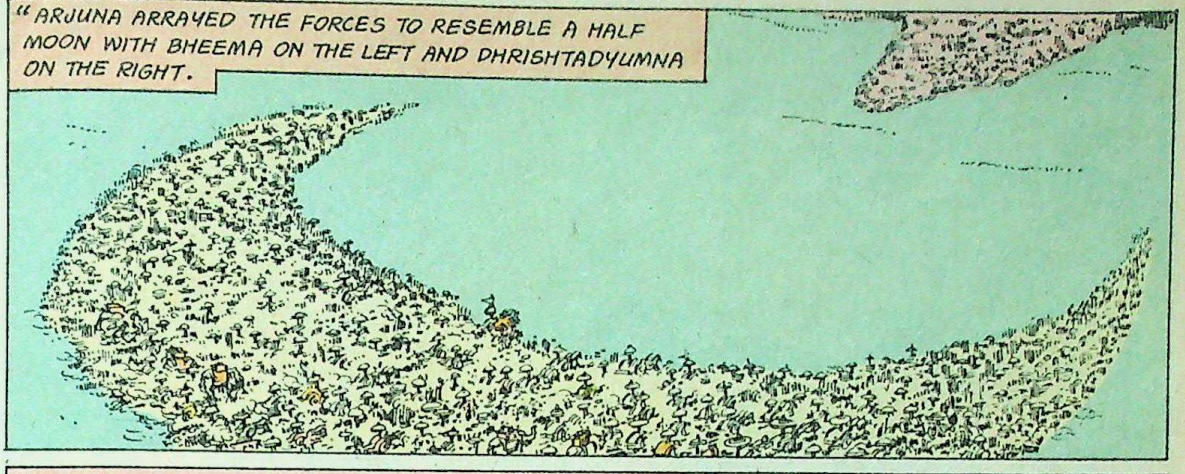

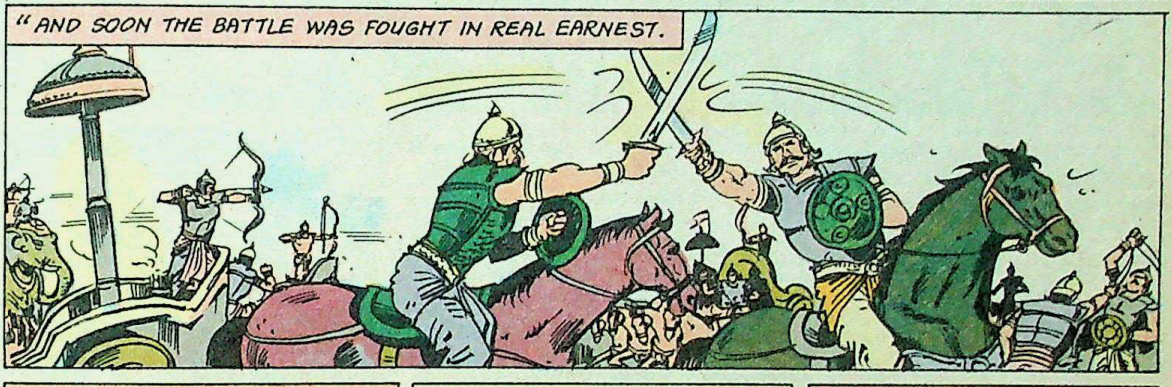

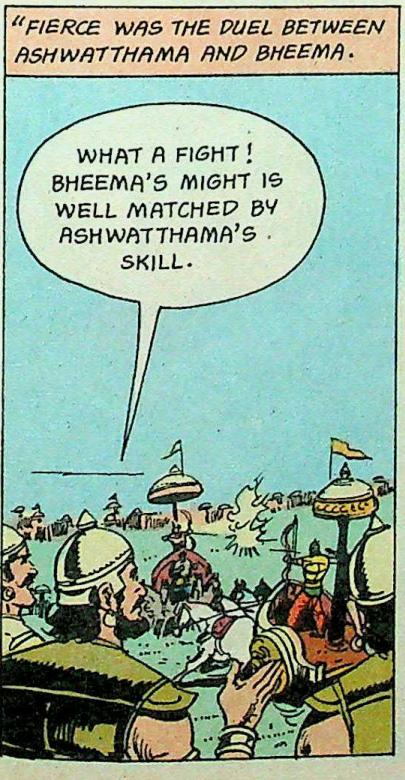

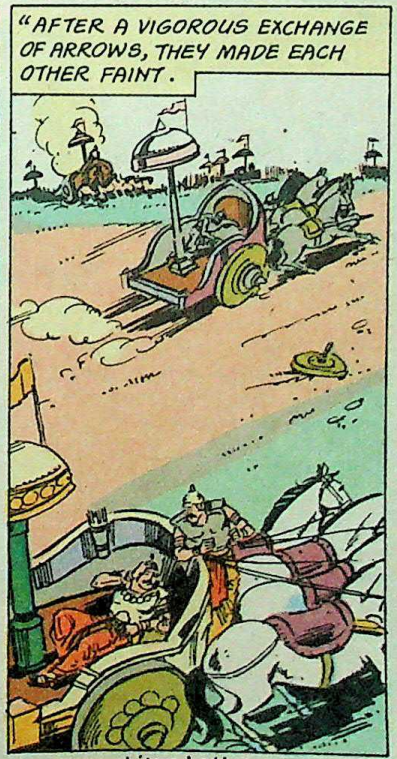

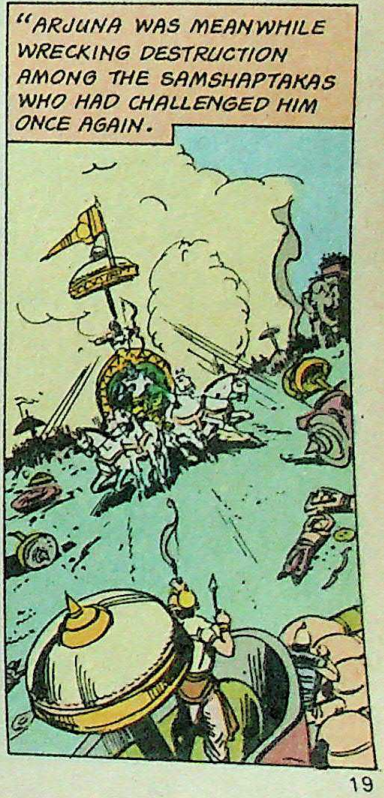

amar chitra katha

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"EVEN AS HE KEPT REDUCING THEIR NUMBERS, ASHWATTHAMA CALLED OUT TO HIM FROM ANOTHER DIRECTION.

COME, ARJUNA. TREAT ME LIKE YOUR GUEST. ENTERTAIN ME WITH ALL YOUR WEAPONS.

"ARJUNA CONSULTED KRISHNA.

SHOULD I FIGHT THE SAMSHAPTAKAS OR ACCEPT ASHWATTHAMA'S CHALLENGE? TELL ME, O KRISHNA.

"IN RESPONSE, KRISHNA LED THE CHARIOT TOWARDS ASHWATTHAMA. A FURIOUS FIGHT ENSUED.

"SEEING ASHWATTHAMA GAINING AN EDGE OVER ARJUNA, KRISHNA SAID—

WHAT HAS COME OVER YOU? HAVE YOU LOST YOUR HOLD ON YOUR GANDEEVA?

SEE HOW THIS SON OF MY GURU IS TRYING TO KILL US. I WILL TAKE CARE OF HIM.

"THE FURY WITH WHICH ARJUNA THEN SHOT HIS ARROWS PIERCED NOT ONLY ASHWATTHAMA'S HORSES AND CHARIOT, BUT ALSO FELLED THE ELEPHANTS AND SOLDIERS WHO WERE FAR AWAY.

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"GRIEVOUSLY INJURED, ASHWATTHAMA'S HORSES FLED THE FIELD, CARRYING THE CHARIOT AWAY WITH THEM.

"AS HE WAS LED AWAY FROM THE FIELD, ASHWATTHAMA REFLECTED.

KRISHNA AND ARJUNA ARE BOUND TO BE VICTORIOUS. I WILL NOT CONFRONT ARJUNA AGAIN. LET ME INSTEAD JOIN KARNA'S FORCES.

"KARNA WAS BUSY CONFRONTING NAKULA'S ONSLAUGHT.

O KARNA! THE GODS ARE INDEED PLEASED WITH ME TODAY. HOW I LONG TO KILL YOU, THE ROOT CAUSE OF ALL THIS ANIMOSITY!

BRAVE MEN DO NOT TALK; THEY ACT. LET ME PUT YOUR PRIDE IN ITS PLACE.

"KARNA ACTED OUT HIS THREAT AND UNABLE TO CONTAIN HIS ATTACK, NAKULA TRIED TO ESCAPE. KARNA LAUGHED AND SAID:

DO YOU REALISE YOU WERE BOASTING IN VAIN? RUN AWAY NOW.

"BY NOON WHILE KARNA CIRCLED THE BATTLEFIELD CAUSING HAVOC AND DESTRUCTION, SEVERAL DUELS WERE BEING FOUGHT.

"YUYUTSU FOUGHT ULOOKA.

"KRIPA CONFRONTED DHRISHTADYUMNA TO AVENGE THE DEATH OF DRONA.

"KRITAVARMA'S ARROW PIERCED SHIKHANDI'S ARMOUR AND, AS HE FAINTED, HE HELD ON TO THE FLAGPOST.

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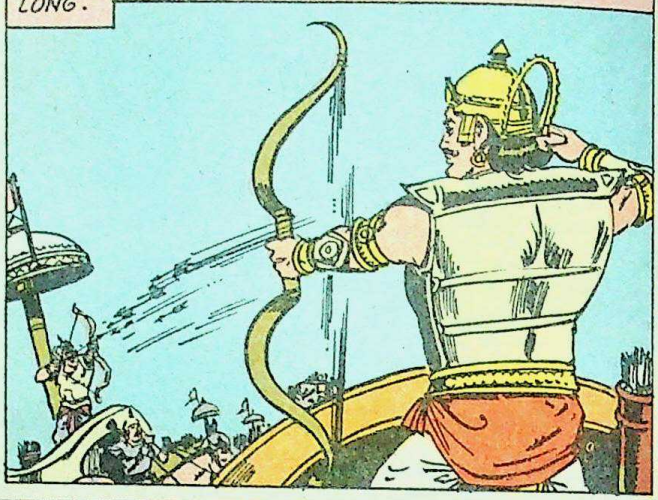
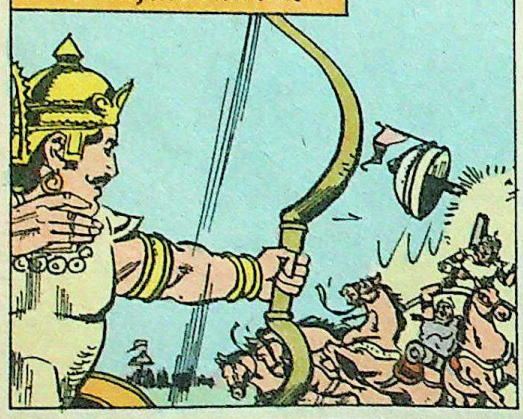
"ARJUNA WAS IN HIS ELEMENT DESTROYING THE SAMSHAPTAKAS WHO HAD ESCAPED HIS FURY EARLIER.

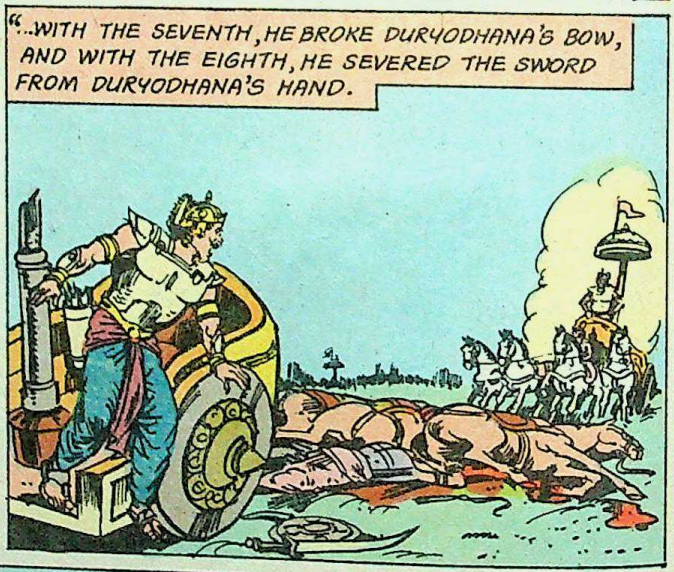
"DURYODHANA'S CONFRONTATION WITH YUDHISHTHIRA WAS IN KEEPING WITH A BRAVE KING. BUT NOT FOR LONG.



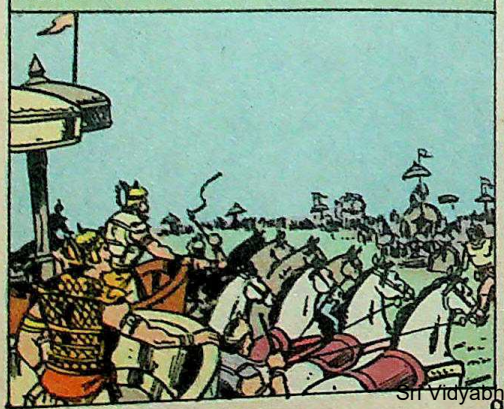
"WITH FOUR WELL-ARMED ARROWS, YUDHISHTHIRA KILLED DURYODHANA'S FOUR HORSES; WITH THE FIFTH ARROW, HE BEHEADED THE CHARIOTEER. WITH THE SIXTH, THE BANNER...



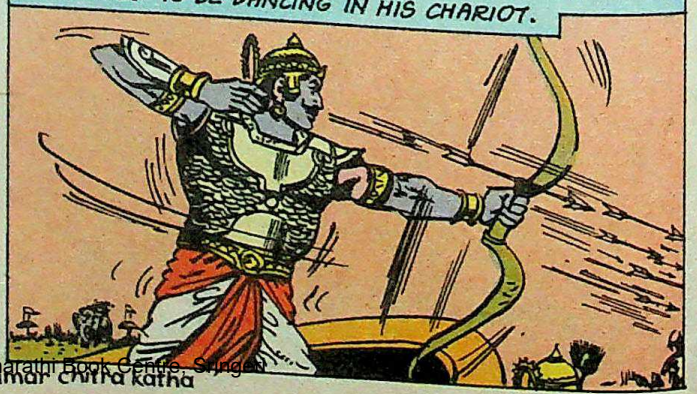
"...WITH THE SEVENTH, HE BROKE DURYODHANA'S BOW, AND WITH THE EIGHTH, HE SEVERED THE SWORD FROM DURYODHANA'S HAND.



"SEEING HIS PLIGHT, KARNA, ASHWATTHAMA AND KRIPA RUSHED TO HIS AID. SOON THE FIGHT BECAME GENERAL.



"SO SWIFTLY DID ARJUNA SHOOT HIS ARROWS THAT THE SKY AS WELL AS THE EIGHT DIRECTIONS SEEMED TO BE FILLED WITH THE ARROWS RELEASED BY HIS GANDEEVA. HE SEEMED TO BE DANCING IN HIS CHARIOT.



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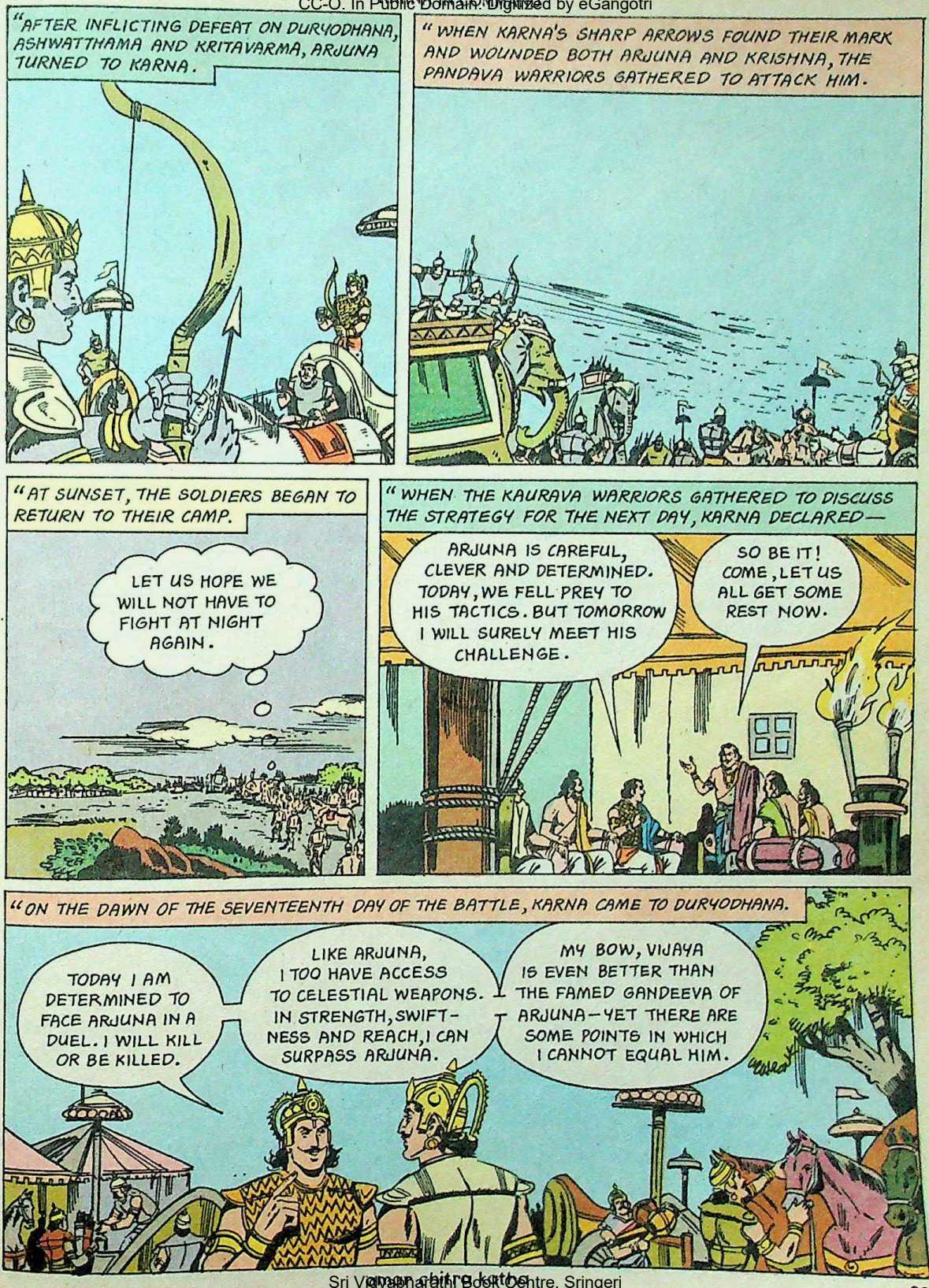

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"AS THEY PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE BATTLEFIELD, SHALYA CONTINUED TO EXTOL ARJUNA'S VIRTUES.

LIKE THE SUN AND THE MOON ARE KRISHNA AND ARJUNA. YOU ARE A MERE FIREFLY IN COMPARISON.

I PROMISED TO ALLOW YOU TO SPEAK FREELY, OTHERWISE...

"BUT WHEN THEY CONTINUED TO EXCHANGE INSULTS DURYODHANA INTERVENED—

KARNA, PLEASE STOP ARGUING. SHALYA, I REQUEST YOU TO PUT AN END TO THIS FUTILE TALK.

"SEEING THE COMPLEX FORMATION OF THE KAURAVAS, YUDHISHTHIRA ASKED ARJUNA TO ARRAY THEIR FORCES IN A SUITABLE FORMATION.

ARJUNA, YOU ATTACK KARNA. BHEEMA WILL CONFRONT DURYODHANA. NAKULA WILL FACE VRISHASENA*, SAHADEVA WILL MEET SHAKUNI AND DHRISHTADYUMNA WILL FIGHT ASHWATTHAMA. I WILL FIGHT KRIPACHARYA.

"WHEN THE SAMSHAPTAKAS CALLED OUT TO ARJUNA, HE ATTACKED THEM SINGLE-HANDED.

"AFTER THEIR NUMBERS BECAME DEPLETED, HE RAGED THROUGH THE KAURAVA FORCES LIKE FURY INCARNATE.

"KARNA TOO WAS IN HIS ELEMENT. HE RESEMBLED INDRA DEMOLISHING THE ASURAS.

* KARNA'S SON.

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"YUDHISHTHIRA APPROACHED HIM.

LET ME SEE YOUR FAMED PROWESS. SHOW ME HOW POWERFUL YOU ARE.

I WILL BE TOO GLAD TO DO SO.

"ALTHOUGH SATYAKI AND OTHERS CAME TO HELP YUDHISHTHIRA, KARNA ROUTED THEM ALL. WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA'S ARMOUR WAS TORN ASUNDER, HE TURNED AWAY.

ARE YOU A TRUE KSHATRIYA? THEN HOW CAN YOU RUN AWAY? GO BACK TO ARJUNA OR KRISHNA. I WILL NOT KILL YOU IN THE BATTLEFIELD.

"BHEEMA WAS ENRAGED AT YUDHISHTHIRA'S INSULT. UNDER HIS ATTACK, KARNA FAINTED.

I WILL CUT OFF HIS TONGUE FOR INSULTING MY BROTHER AND KING.

RESTRAIN YOURSELF BHEEMA. REMEMBER, KILLING KARNA IS THE TASK OF ARJUNA.

"MEANWHILE ASHWATTHAMA CHALLENGED ARJUNA TO A DUEL AND COVERED HIM WITH ARROWS. KRISHNA EXCLAIMED—

WHAT HAS COME OVER YOU, ARJUNA? HAS YOUR GRIP LOOSENED? HAVE YOU LOST YOUR STRENGTH? THIS IS NO TIME TO BE CONSIDERATE TO A GURU OR HIS SON.

"KRISHNA'S TAUNTS HAD THE DESIRED EFFECT. WITH DIVINE WEAPONS, ARJUNA ATTACKED ASHWATTHAMA WITH SUCH FORCE THAT THE LATTER FAINTED AND HIS CHARIOT WAS DRIVEN AWAY FROM THE BATTLEFIELD.

"KRISHNA THEN DREW ARJUNA'S ATTENTION TO KARNA.

BEHOLD, KARNA! HOW GRACEFULLY HE FIGHTS. THE FIELD IS STREWN WITH HIS VICTIMS. IT IS TIME YOU CONFRONTED HIM.

YES, I WILL. BUT WHERE IS YUDHISHTHIRA?

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"BHEEMA TOLD HIM.

YUDHISHTHIRA, WOUNDED BY KARNA, HAS RETURNED TO THE CAMP.

"A WORRIED ARJUNA TOLD KRISHNA.

I MUST SEE MY BROTHER AT ONCE. THEN I WILL RETURN AND KILL KARNA.

"WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAW KRISHNA AND ARJUNA COMING, HE PRESUMED KARNA HAD BEEN KILLED.

AT LAST HE HAS BEEN KILLED! TELL ME, ARJUNA, WHICH ASTRA DID YOU USE TO KILL KARNA!

NO, I HAVE NOT KILLED HIM AS YET. I CAME TO ENQUIRE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH.

"YUDHISHTHIRA WAS FILLED WITH DESPAIR.

YOU HAVE DISAPPOINTED ME, ARJUNA. I WAS DEPENDING ON YOU TO SAVE OUR HONOUR. NOW SHAME ON YOU, YOUR CHARIOT AND YOUR MUCH VAUNTED STRENGTH.

"BEFORE ARJUNA COULD REPLY, KRISHNA INTERVENED AND PACIFIED HIM. WITH YUDHISHTHIRA'S BLESSINGS THEY RETURNED TO THE SCENE OF BATTLE.

REMEMBER, ARJUNA, KARNA IS NOT AN EASY ADVERSARY. HE IS A MATCHLESS ARCHER. YOU ALONE CAN KILL HIM.

WITH YOU AS MY PROTECTOR AND LORD, MY VICTORY IS ENSURED, KRISHNA.

"SHALYA'S EARLIER TAUNTS WERE NOW REPLACED WITH ENCOURAGEMENT AND ADMIRATION FOR KARNA.

HERE COMES ARJUNA. NOW YOU ALONE CAN KILL HIM.

TAKE ME TO HIM.

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"BUT WHEN KARNA TRIED TO APPROACH ARJUNA, HIS PATH WAS BLOCKED BY FIVE PANDAVA WARRIORS.

"KARNA ROUTED THEM ALL IN A TRICE.

"IN THE GENERAL FIGHT THAT ENSUED, BHEEMA ENCOUNTERED DUHSHASANA.

COME DUHSHASANA! I HAVE WAITED LONG TO FIGHT WITH YOU. I HAVE AN ACCOUNT TO SETTLE.

I TOO REMEMBER A LOT, BHEEMA.

"WHEN HIS BOW WAS BROKEN, BHEEMA TOOK UP A HUGE MACE.

I REMEMBER HOW YOU HELD DRAUPADI'S HAIR WITH YOUR SINFUL HANDS.

I ALSO REMEMBER HOW SHAKUNI WANTED TO ENSLAVE HER ALONG WITH ALL OF YOU.

"AFTER HE KNOCKED DUHSHASANA OFF HIS CHARIOT, BHEEMA LET OUT A ROAR.

YOU REMEMBER, DO YOU? THEN YOU WILL REMEMBER HOW I HAD VOWED TO DRINK YOUR BLOOD.

"BHEEMA TURNED TO DURYODHANA.

I HAVE YOUR BROTHER AT MY MERCY. TRY AND SAVE HIM NOW.

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"BHEEMA CUT OFF DUHSHASANA'S RIGHT HAND, RIPPED OPEN HIS CHEST AND TASTED HIS BLOOD.

"KARNA WAS GRIEF-STRICKEN. SHALYA COUNSELLED HIM.

DO NOT LOSE HEART, KARNA. YOU ARE DURYODHANA'S ONLY HOPE. COME LET US GO TO ARJUNA.

"KARNA'S SON VRISHASENA WAS TORMENTING NAKULA. BHEEMA CALLED TO ARJUNA FOR HELP.

I WILL KILL KARNA'S SON IN FRONT OF HIM.

"ARJUNA'S SHARP ARROWS FOUND THEIR MARK. KARNA SAW HIS SON BEING KILLED. ENRAGED HE SAID—

NOW I CANNOT WAIT TO KILL THIS ARJUNA. TAKE ME CLOSER, O SHALYA.

"AT LAST THE TWO HEROES WERE FACE TO FACE, WELL-MATCHED WITH THEIR SINEWY BODIES RUBBED WITH RED SANDALPASTE. BOTH WERE MOUNTED ON EXCELLENT CHARIOTS WITH WHITE UMBRELLAS AND WHITE HORSES.

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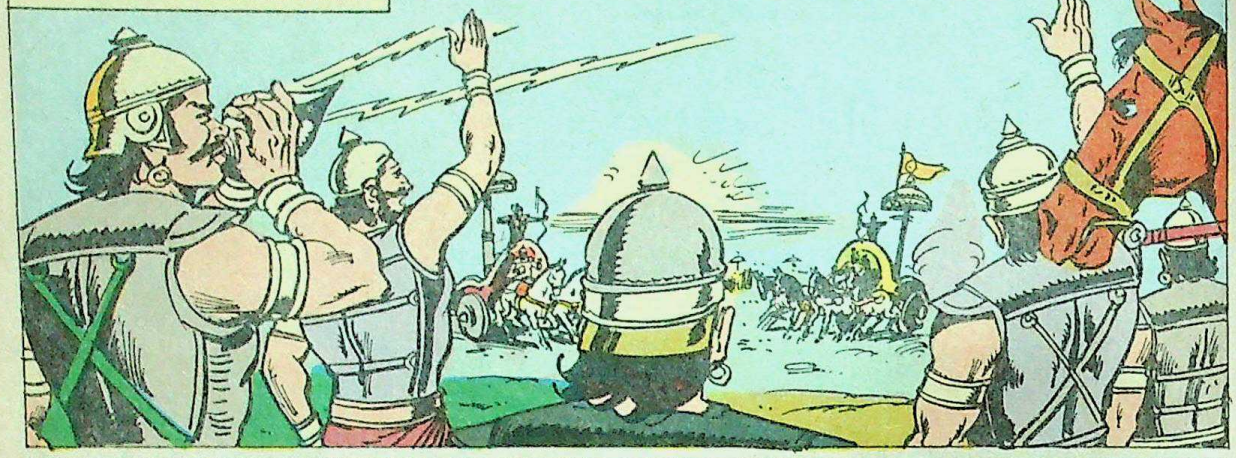
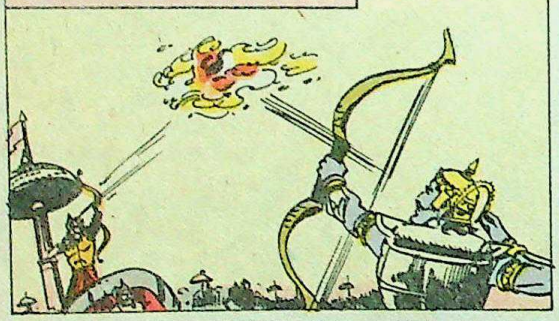
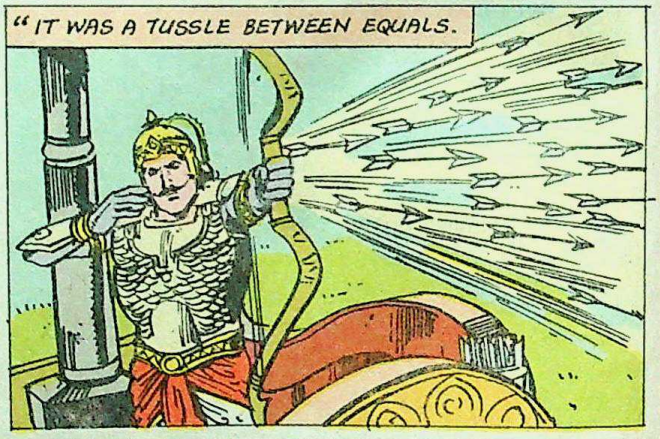
"AS THEY WERE ENGAGED IN THE DUEL, THEIR MEN ENCOURAGED THEM WITH CHEERS AND THE BLOWING OF CONCH SHELLS.



"SOON, INSTEAD OF EARTHLY WEAPONS, THEY RESORTED TO CELESTIAL ONES. ARJUNA SENT OFF THE AGNEYASTRA AND KARNA COUNTERED IT WITH THE VARUNASTRA.



"IT WAS A TUSSLE BETWEEN EQUALS.



"KRISHNA SAID —

HOW COME KARNA IS ABLE TO DESTROY ALL YOUR WEAPONS TODAY? ROUSE YOURSELF!

I WILL USE THE BRAHMA-STRA NOW.

"THE BRAHMASTRA COVERED THE FIELD WITH ARROWS AND DEAD BODIES BUT KARNA'S ARROWS WERE ALSO COMING IN A CONTINUOUS STREAM.

"THE AIR RESOUNDED WITH THE TERRIBLE TWANGS OF THE GANDEEVA OF ARJUNA AND THE VIJAYA OF KARNA. THEY TWANGED TO LET FORTH A BARRAGE OF ARROWS. ELEVEN TIMES KARNA CUT ARJUNA'S BOW STRINGS. QUICK AS A FLASH, ARJUNA REPLACED THEM EVERY TIME. KARNA THEN DISCHARGED FIVE SNAKE-LIKE ARROWS. ARJUNA CUT EVERY ONE OF THEM INTO PIECES.

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"SO NUMEROUS WERE THE ARROWS SHOT BY ARJUNA THAT NOTHING — NEITHER KARNA'S CHARIOT NOR THE SUN IN THE SKY — WAS VISIBLE FOR SOME TIME.

"SOON THE WARRIORS BEHIND KARNA FLED IN TERROR OF ARJUNA. KARNA AIMED THE NAGASTRA AT ARJUNA'S NECK.

ARJUNA! BID FAREWELL TO THE WORLD. THIS IS YOUR LAST MOMENT.

"JUST IN TIME, KRISHNA PRESSED HARD SO THAT THE HORSES BENT DOWN AND THE CHARIOT SUNK BY FIVE INCHES IN THE GROUND. NOW THE WEAPON SCRAPED PAST ARJUNA'S HEAD AND KNOCKED OFF HIS CROWN.

"ARJUNA GATHERED HIS CURLY TRESSES IN A WHITE KERCHIEF AND RESUMED FIGHTING. BY NOW EVEN KRISHNA AND SHALYA WERE WOUNDED.

"MEANWHILE, KARNA'S CHARIOT WHEEL WAS SINKING INTO THE GROUND. WHEN HE NOTICED IT, HE RECALLED HOW A BRAHMANA HAD ONCE CURSED HIM.

WHEN YOU ARE CONFRONTING YOUR BIGGEST ENEMY, YOUR CHARIOT WHEELS WILL SINK INTO THE GROUND. AS YOU KILLED MY POOR COW, YOU TOO WILL BE KILLED.

"BY NOW THE LEFT WHEEL WAS TOTALLY SUNK IN THE SOFT EARTH. KARNA WAS FORCED TO DESCEND.

ARJUNA, PLEASE STOP FIGHTING WHILE I RAISE THIS WHEEL. IT IS NOT FAIR TO FIGHT ME NOW WHEN I AM ON THE GROUND.

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"KRISHNA WAS FURIOUS.

SO YOU WANT US TO BE FAIR. DID YOU THINK OF BEING FAIR AT THE GAME OF DICE? WERE YOU RIGHTEOUS WHEN YOU SURROUNDED AND KILLED ABHIMANYU?

"KARNA CLIMBED ONTO HIS CHARIOT AGAIN AND FOUGHT ARJUNA. WHEN HE MANAGED TO INJURE HIM, HE GOT OFF THE CHARIOT AGAIN. KRISHNA SAID—

HURRY, ARJUNA! KILL HIM BEFORE HE GETS UP ON HIS CHARIOT.

"ARJUNA INVOKED A DIVINE ASTRA, ANJALIKA, AND AIMED IT AT KARNA WHO WAS STILL STRUGGLING TO LIFT THE WHEEL.

IF I HAVE LIVED A DUTIFUL AND RIGHTEOUS LIFE, MAY THIS WEAPON DESTROY MY ENEMY.

LIKE THE SUN DESCENDING ON EARTH, THE HEAD OF THE GREAT KARNA FELL ON THE GROUND.

"THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA MAHABHARATA.

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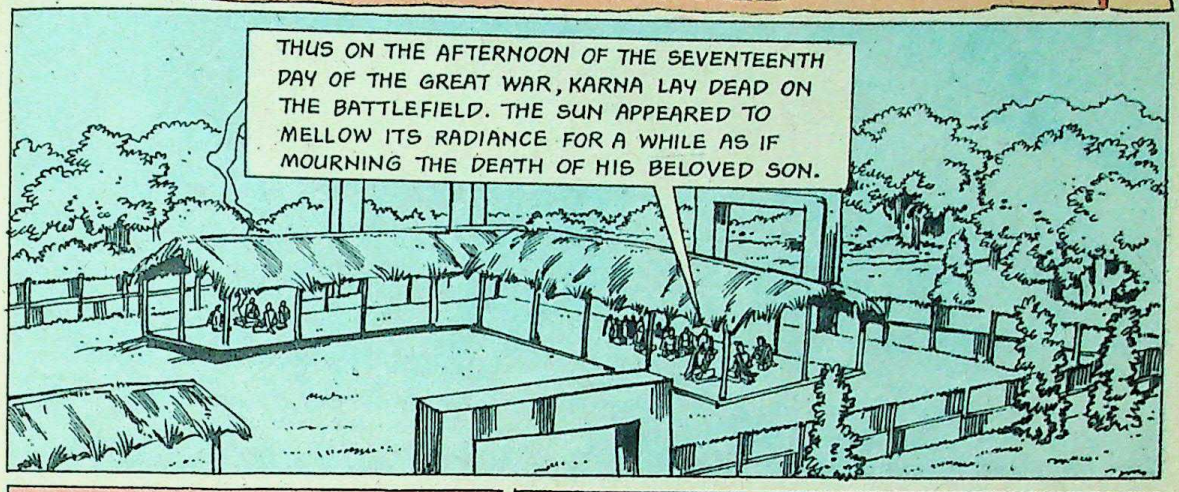
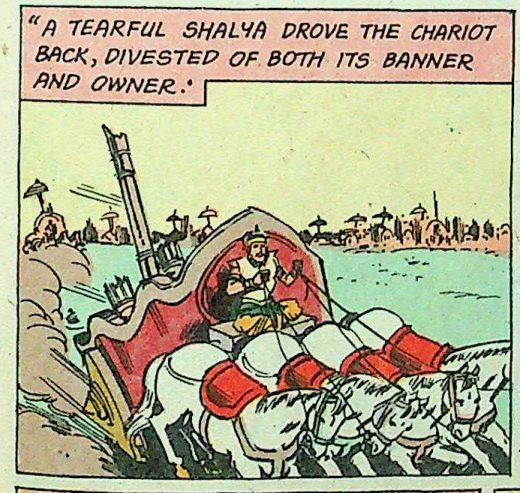
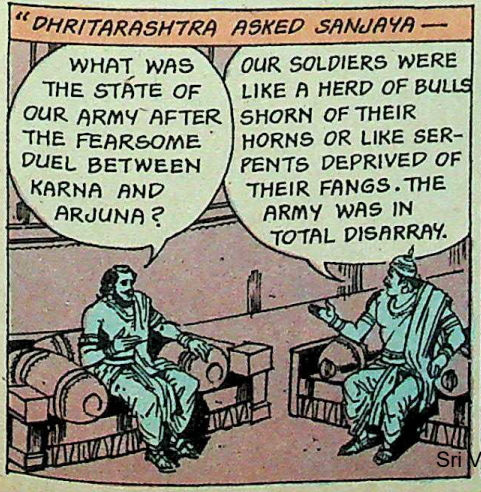
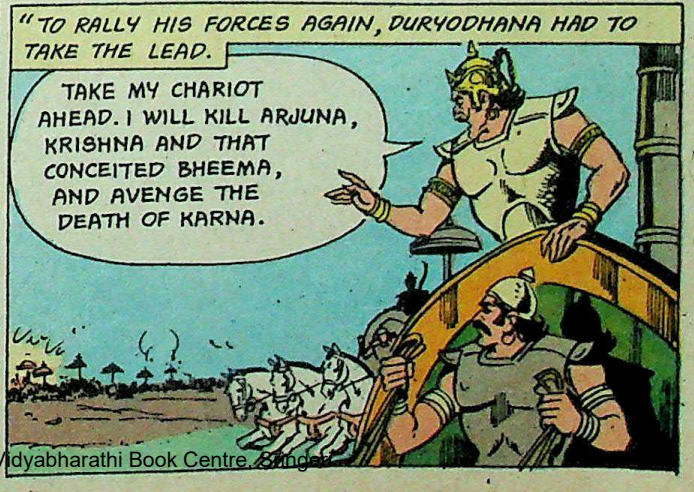
Mahabharata-38
THE KURUS ROUTED









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"BHEEMA JUMPED DOWN FROM HIS CHARIOT AND WITH HIS MACE MERCILESSLY KILLED THE SOLDIERS ON FOOT...

...WHILE ARJUNA ATTACKED THE WARRIORS ON CHARIOTS.

"TORMENTED BY THE ARROWS OF DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA, THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS BEGAN TO FLEE THE BATTLEFIELD.

"DURYODHANA ADDRESSED THE FLEEING SOLDIERS.

WHERE WILL YOU RUN? THE COWARD AND THE BRAVE ALIKE HAVE TO FACE DEATH ULTIMATELY. COME, MY BRAVE WARRIORS, CHOOSE TO DIE LIKE TRUE KSHATRIYAS.

"BUT THE WOUNDED AND FRIGHTENED SOLDIERS WERE IN NO MOOD TO HEAR HIS DISCOURSE. THEY RAN AS FAST AS THEIR FEET COULD TAKE THEM. SHALYA SAID TO DURYODHANA —

BEHOLD, O KING! THE FIELD IS STREWN WITH FALLEN SOLDIERS. COME, LET US RETURN TO CAMP. ALLOW THE SOLDIERS TO GO BACK.

"DURYODHANA COULD NOT CONTROL HIS TEARS AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY BACK TO THEIR CAMP. HE COULD NOT GET OVER KARNA'S DEATH.

OH! KARNA! KARNA!

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"IN A JUBILANT MOOD, KRISHNA AND ARJUNA RETURNED TO THE CAMP.

"THEY RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA'S TENT TO CONVEY THE NEWS OF KARNA'S DEATH.

"KRISHNA SAID—

IT IS INDEED FORTUNATE THAT ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA, SAHADEVA AND YOU HAVE EMERGED UNSCATHED IN THE BATTLE. COME, LET US HASTEN TO FINISH THE TASK IN HAND. YOU MUST PREPARE YOURSELF TO RULE THE EARTH NOW.

"YUDHISHTHIRA AFFECTIONATELY HELD KRISHNA'S HAND AND SAID —

WITH YOU ON OUR SIDE, OUR VICTORY WAS CERTAIN, O LORD! TONIGHT, AFTER THIRTEEN LONG YEARS, WE WILL SLEEP WITHOUT A WORRY.

"IN THE KAURAVA CAMP THE VENERABLE KRIPACHARYA COUNSELLED DURYODHANA.

TO FIGHT IN BATTLE IS INDEED THE PRIME DUTY OF A KSHATRIYA. BUT NOW BHEESHMA, DRONA, KARNA, JAYADRATHA AND ALL YOUR BROTHERS HAVE BEEN KILLED. EVEN YOUR SON LAKSHMANA HAS BEEN KILLED.

SEVENTEEN LONG DAYS OF DREADFUL BATTLE HAVE PASSED. LIKE A RAGING FOREST FIRE, ARJUNA HAS DESTROYED YOUR ARMY. MAKE PEACE WITH THE PANDAVAS. THIS IS MY SINCERE ADVICE TO YOU.

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"FOR A WHILE, DURYODHANA SAT SILENT. THEN WITH A SIGH HE SAID —

I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL, BUT I CANNOT TAKE YOUR ADVICE. A MAN ON HIS DEATHBED DOES NOT RELISH MEDICINE.

HAVING RULED OVER THE ENTIRE EARTH, HOW CAN I BE A DEPENDANT OF THE PANDAVAS. TO DIE PEACEFULLY IN BED IS SHAMEFUL FOR A TRUE KSHATRIYA. SO FIGHT I MUST AND DIE A GLORIOUS DEATH.

"HIS SOLDIERS HAILED HIS DECISION AND RESOLVING TO FIGHT THE NEXT DAY THEY ALL RETIRED FOR THE NIGHT.

"NEXT MORNING, DURYODHANA CONSULTED ASHWATTHAMA.

I SEEK YOUR ADVICE AS THE SON OF OUR GURU. WHO DO YOU SUGGEST SHOULD LEAD OUR ARMY NOW?

BRAVE SHALYA SHOULD BE OUR COMMANDER!

"DURYODHANA REQUESTED SHALYA TO TAKE CHARGE.

THIS IS A TESTING TIME FOR US. PLEASE TAKE COMMAND AND LEAD US TO VICTORY.

I SHALL DO MY BEST FOR YOU. EITHER WIN THE WAR OR DIE IN THE BATTLEFIELD.

"THE KAURAVAS THEN PLANNED THEIR STRATEGY—

REFRAIN FROM SINGLE COMBATS. WE WILL FIGHT NO DUELS TODAY. OUR WARRIORS WILL FIGHT IN UNISON AND PROTECT ONE ANOTHER.

"WHEN THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS LEARNT THAT SHALYA WOULD BE THEIR COMMANDER, THEY CHEERED SO LOUDLY THAT YUDHISHTHIRA COULD HEAR THEM.

I THINK SHALYA, THE ACE ARCHER, HAS BEEN PUT IN COMMAND. O KRISHNA, WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST WE SHOULD DO?

SHALYA IS INDEED SUPERIOR TO STALWARTS LIKE SHIKHANDI.

"KRISHNA CONTINUED —

YOU ALONE ARE CAPABLE OF KILLING SHALYA, O KING! FORGET THAT HE IS YOUR UNCLE AND FIGHT.

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"THE PANDAVAS DIVIDED THEIR FORCES INTO THREE DIVISIONS, HEADED BY DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI.

"IN HIS IMPATIENCE TO KILL SHALYA, YUDHISHTHIRA RAPIDLY ADVANCED TOWARDS HIM.

"ARJUNA ATTACKED THE SAMSHAPTAKAS AND BHEEMA FELL UPON SHAKUNI.

"DHRITARASHTRA INTERRUPTED SANJAYA'S NARRATION.

HOW MANY SOLDIERS REMAINED IN THE TWO ARMIES?

IN YOUR ARMY THERE WERE ELEVEN THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SEVENTEEN THOUSAND ELEPHANTS, TWO LAKH HORSES AND THREE CRORE INFANTRY MEN. AMONG THE PANDAVAS THERE WERE SIX THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SIX THOUSAND ELEPHANTS, TEN THOUSAND HORSES AND TWO CRORE SOLDIERS.

"WITH YUDHISHTHIRA LEADING THE WAY, DHRISHTADYUMNA AND SHIKHANDI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA TOGETHER FELL UPON SHALYA.

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"THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE FRIGHTENED OF THIS COMBINED ATTACK. BUT SHALYA WAS UNDAUNTED. HE TOLD HIS CHARIOTEER.

LEAD ME ON TO YUDHISHTHIRA AND WATCH ME IN ACTION TODAY.

"INDEED SHALYA ALONE WAS CAPABLE OF RESTRAINING THE SURGING PANDAVA FORCES.

"JUST THEN, NAKULA ATTACKED KARNA'S SON, CHITRASENA. BEING EQUALLY WELL-MATCHED IN PROWESS, THEIR DUEL WAS LONG DRAWN AND FURIOUS. NAKULA'S CHARIOT WAS DESTROYED. WITH HIS SWORD HELD ALOFT, HE ADVANCED TOWARDS CHITRASENA.

"SUDDENLY, HE LEAPED ONTO CHITRASENA'S CHARIOT, AND WITH A FATAL BLOW FROM HIS SWORD, BEHEADED HIM.

"CHITRASENA'S BROTHERS, SUSHENA AND SATYASENA ATTACKED NAKULA, BUT SOON MET WITH THE SAME FATE AS CHITRASENA.

"SEEING SHALYA BEING ATTACKED BY THE PANDAVAS, KRITAVARMA, KRIPA, SHARUNI AND ASHWATTHAMA CAME TO HIS HELP.

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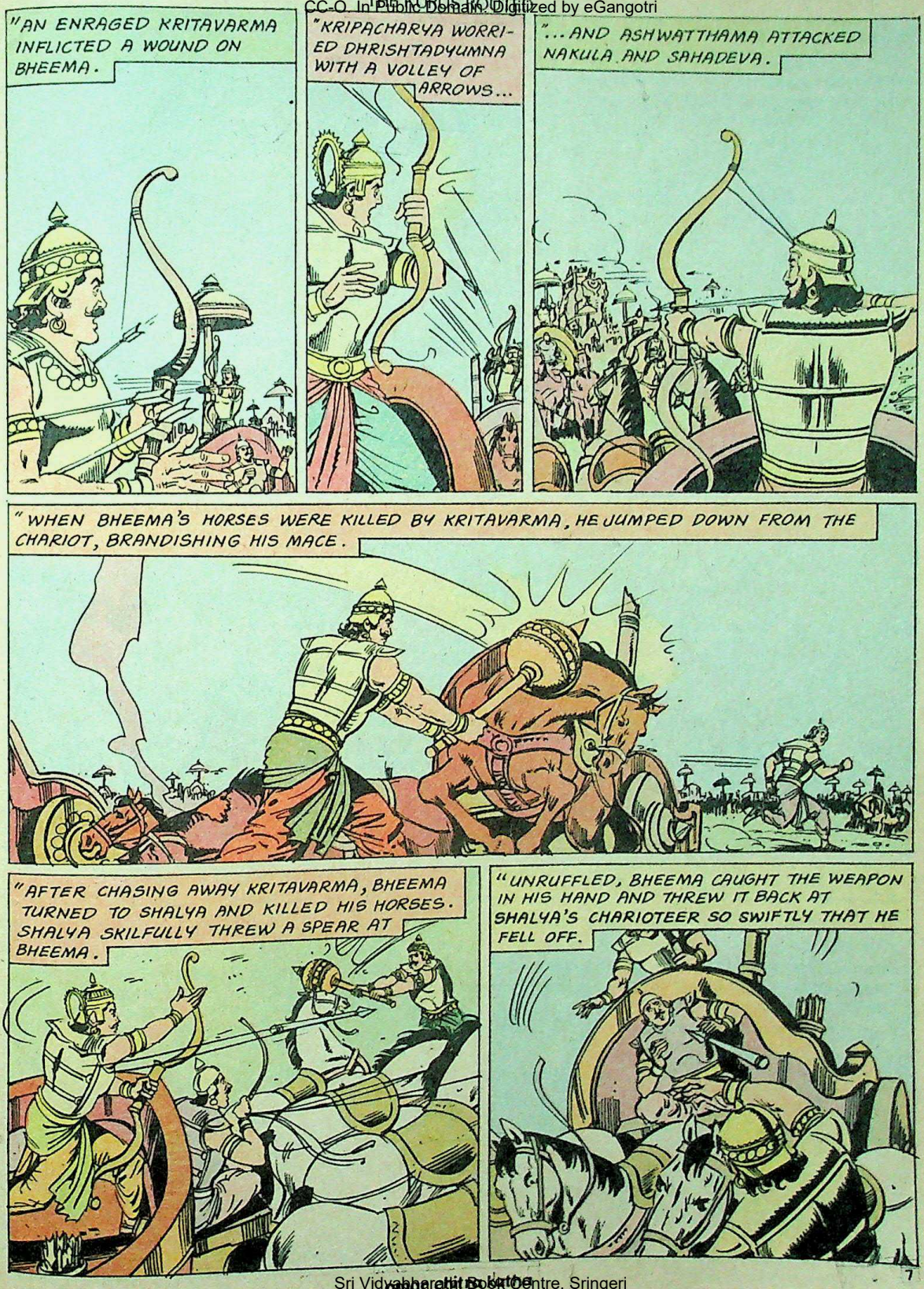

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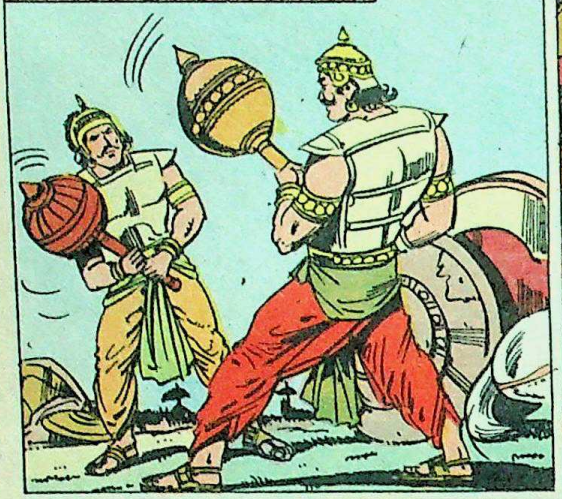
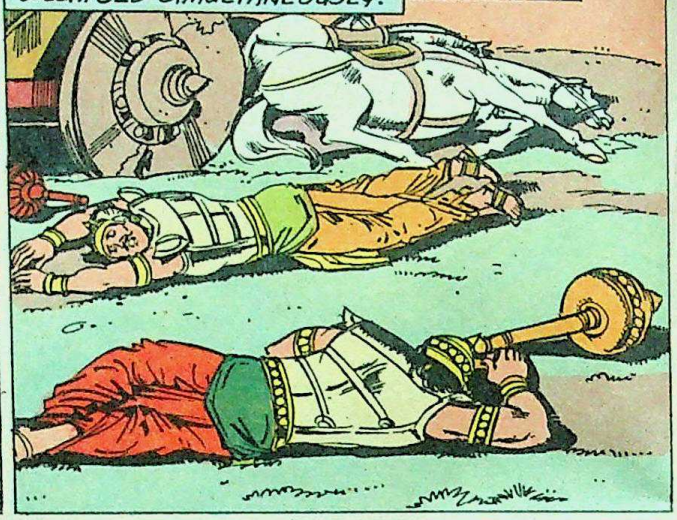
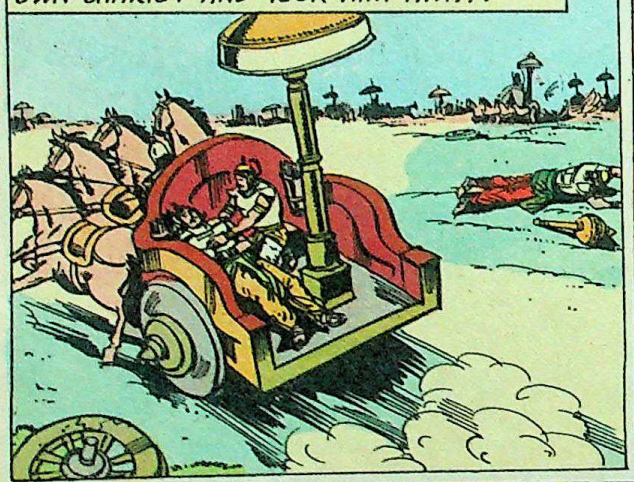
"SHALYA THEN TOOK UP A MACE STANDING TALL LIKE A MOUNTAIN. THE TWO WARRIORS RESEMBLED TWO ENRAGED BULLS RARING FOR A FIGHT.



"SPARKS FLEW EACH TIME THEIR MACES CLASHED. WOUNDED AND BLEEDING PROFUSELY, THEY CIRCLED, REARED AND ATTACKED TILL BOTH OF THEM COLLAPSED SIMULTANEOUSLY.

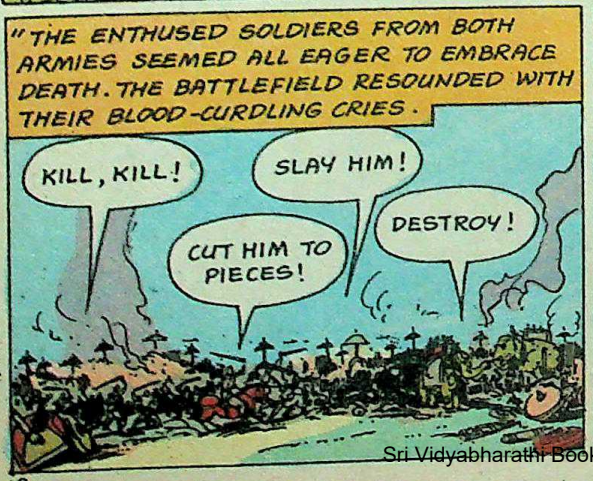


"KRIPACHARYA QUICKLY PUT SHALYA ON HIS OWN CHARIOT AND TOOK HIM AWAY.

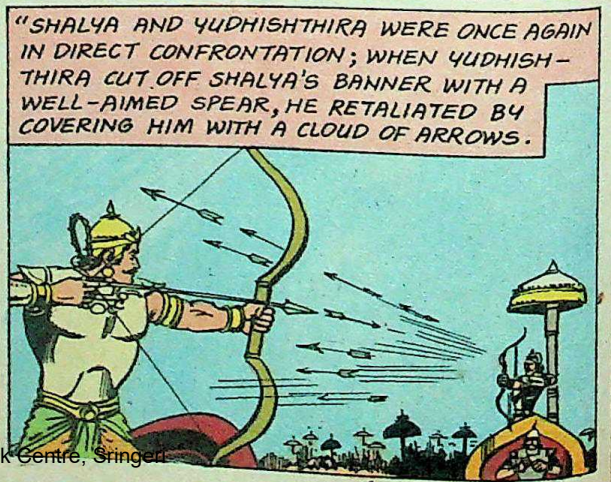


"ON RECOVERING, BHEEMA SPRANG UP WITH A ROAR, READY FOR THE FRAY AGAIN.

"THE ENTHUSED SOLDIERS FROM BOTH ARMIES SEEMED ALL EAGER TO EMBRACE DEATH. THE BATTLEFIELD RESOUNDED WITH THEIR BLOOD-CURDLING CRIES.



"SHALYA AND YUDHISHTHIRA WERE ONCE AGAIN IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION; WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA CUT OFF SHALYA'S BANNER WITH A WELL-AIMED SPEAR, HE RETALIATED BY COVERING HIM WITH A CLOUD OF ARROWS.



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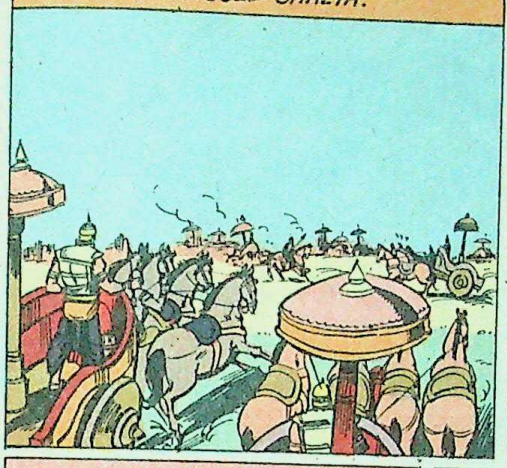
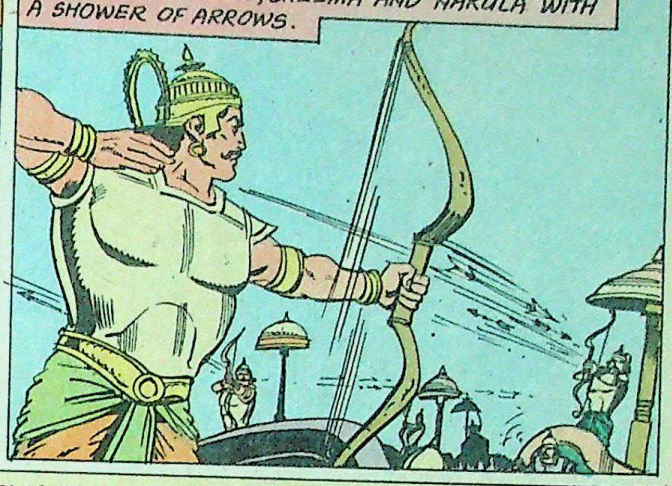
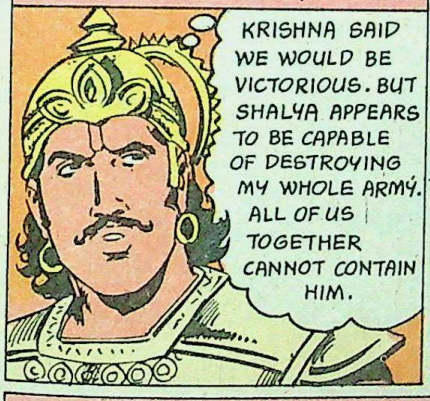
"SATYAKI, BHEEMA, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA'S SIDE AND HARASSED SHALYA.



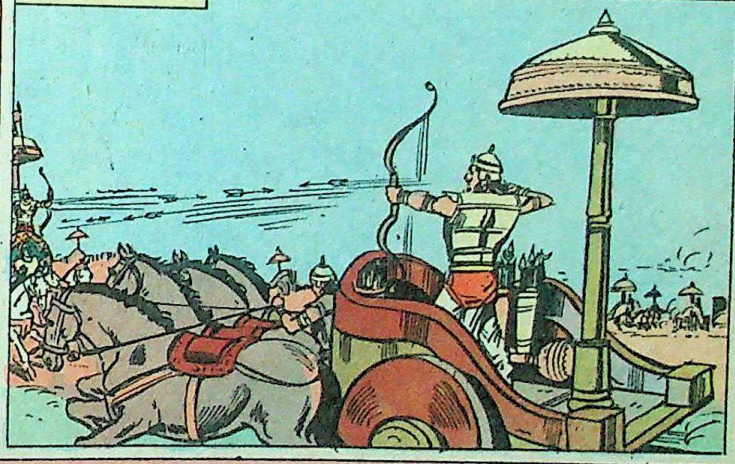
"BUT SHALYA TOOK GOOD CARE OF HIMSELF, ATTACKING SATYAKI, BHEEMA AND NAKULA WITH A SHOWER OF ARROWS.



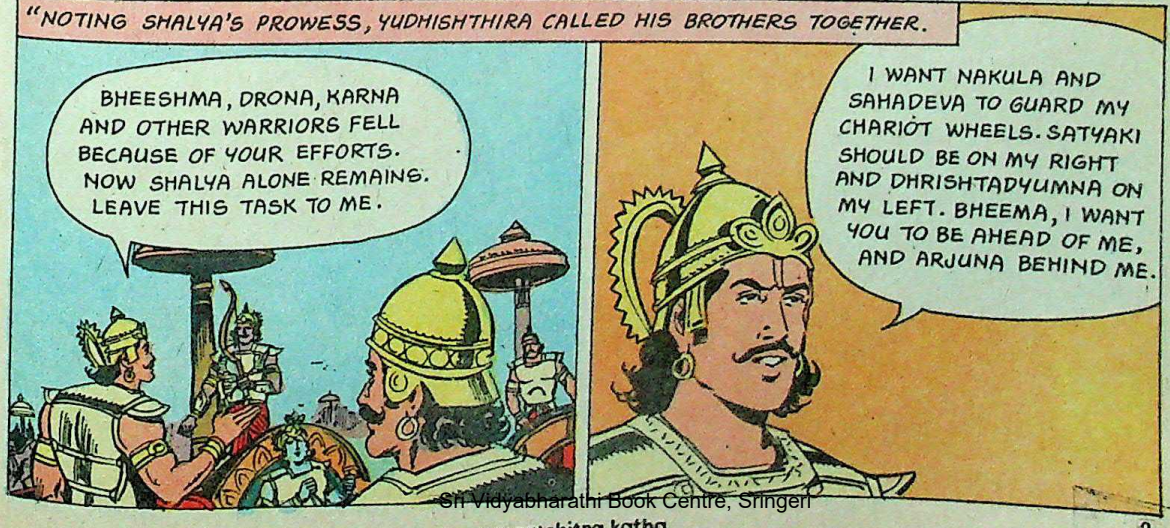
"THE PANDAVAS TRIED VARIOUS WEAPONS ON SHALYA, BUT HE LIVED UP TO HIS REPUTATION OF A GREAT WARRIOR. HE QUELLED THEM ALL. A NIGGLING DOUBT BEGAN TO TORMENT YUDHISHTHIRA.



"MEANWHILE, ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA WERE LOCKED IN COMBAT. ARJUNA'S CHARIOT WAS BARELY VISIBLE UNDER THE ARROWS.



"NOTING SHALYA'S PROWESS, YUDHISHTHIRA CALLED HIS BROTHERS TOGETHER.



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"READILY, THE BROTHERS AGREED. LIKE TWO HUNGRY LIONS POUNCING ON A PREY, YUDHISHTHIRA AND SHALYA LUNGED AT EACH OTHER.

"THE MILD AND CALM YUDHISHTHIRA APPEARED TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO A DETERMINED AND FORMIDABLE FOE.

"LIKE A STRONG GUST OF WIND DISPELLING CLOUDS, YUDHISHTHIRA PLAYED HAVOC WITH THE KAURAVA ARMY.

STAND STILL, SHALYA! HERE I COME!

"SO GALLANTLY DID YUDHISHTHIRA AND SHALYA FIGHT THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHO WOULD WIN IN THE DUEL.

TODAY, SURELY YUDHISHTHIRA WILL WIN THE WAR OR LOSE IT WITH HIS LIFE.

"SHALYA FIRED A HUNDRED ARROWS ON YUDHISHTHIRA WHO RETALIATED WITH THREE HUNDRED. SOON SHALYA'S REAR GUARDS WERE KILLED, HIS HORSES SLAIN AND BANNER FELLED.

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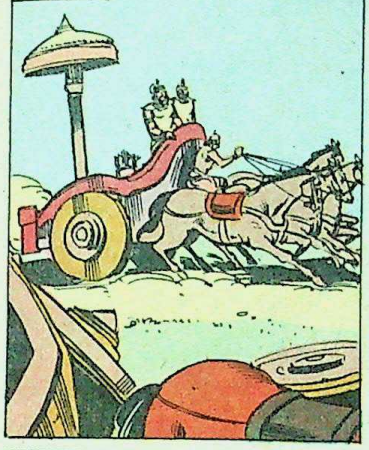
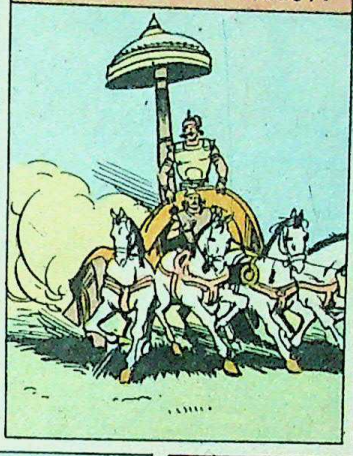
"NOTING SHALYA'S PLIGHT, ASHWATTHAMA QUICKLY PUT HIM ON HIS OWN CHARIOT AND CARRIED HIM AWAY.

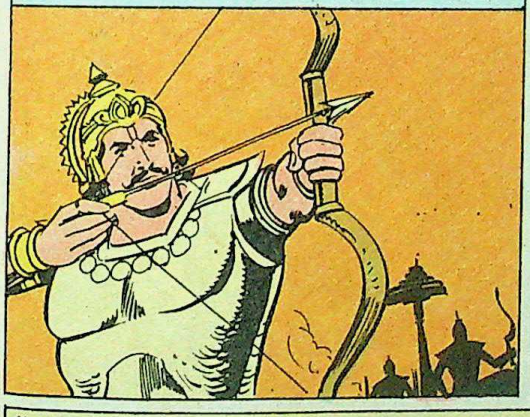


"YUDHISHTHIRA ROARED LIKE A LION AS HE SAW HIS ADVERSARY GETTING AWAY. BUT SOON SHALYA WAS BACK ON ANOTHER CHARIOT.

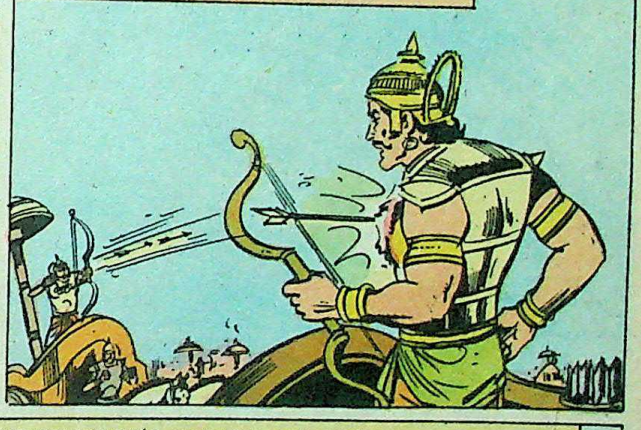


"BHEEMA, SATYAKI, NAKULA AND SAHADEVA FORMED A PROTECTIVE RING ROUND YUDHISHTHIRA AND CHALLENGED SHALYA TO FIGHT.

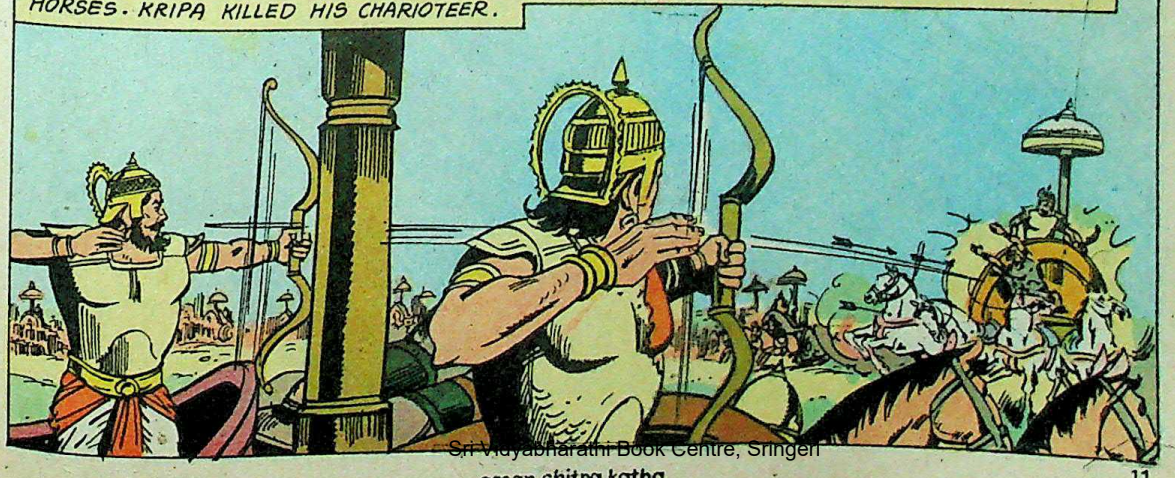
"UNDER YUDHISHTHIRA'S ATTACK SHALYA BECAME UNCONSCIOUS. HOWEVER, HE QUICKLY RECOVERED AND DISCHARGED A HUNDRED ARROWS AT YUDHISHTHIRA.



"WITH NINE WELL-AIMED ARROWS, YUDHISHTHIRA TORE OFF SHALYA'S ARMOUR. IN RETALIATION, SHALYA BROKE YUDHISHTHIRA'S BOW.



"SOON, SHALYA'S ARROWS RENT ASUNDER YUDHISHTHIRA'S GOLDEN ARMOUR AND KILLED HIS HORSES. KRIPA KILLED HIS CHARIOTEER.



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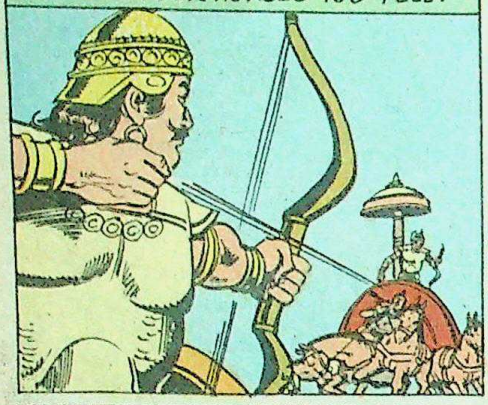
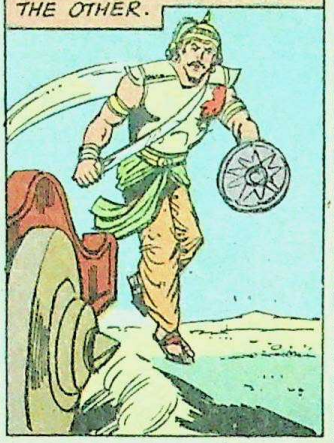
"BHEEMA BEGAN TO HARASS SHALYA. WITH A SINGLE SWIFT ARROW, HE BROKE SHALYA'S BOW AND WITH ANOTHER KILLED THE CHARIOTEER. SOON THE FOUR HORSES TOO FELL.

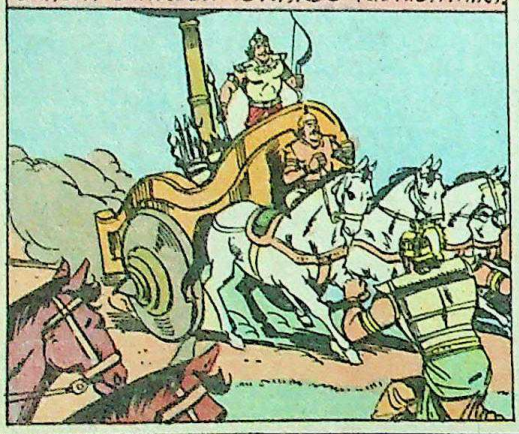


"SHALYA NOW JUMPED DOWN, SWORD IN ONE HAND AND SHIELD IN THE OTHER.

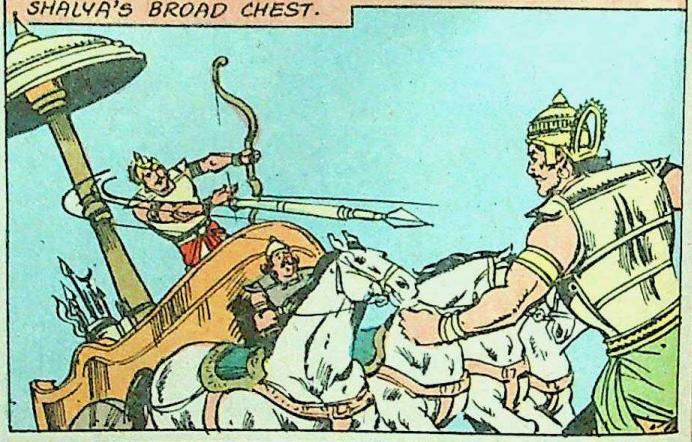


"DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI SURROUNDED SHALYA WHILE BHEEMA BROKE HIS SHIELD TO PIECES AND KNOCKED HIS SWORD OFF.

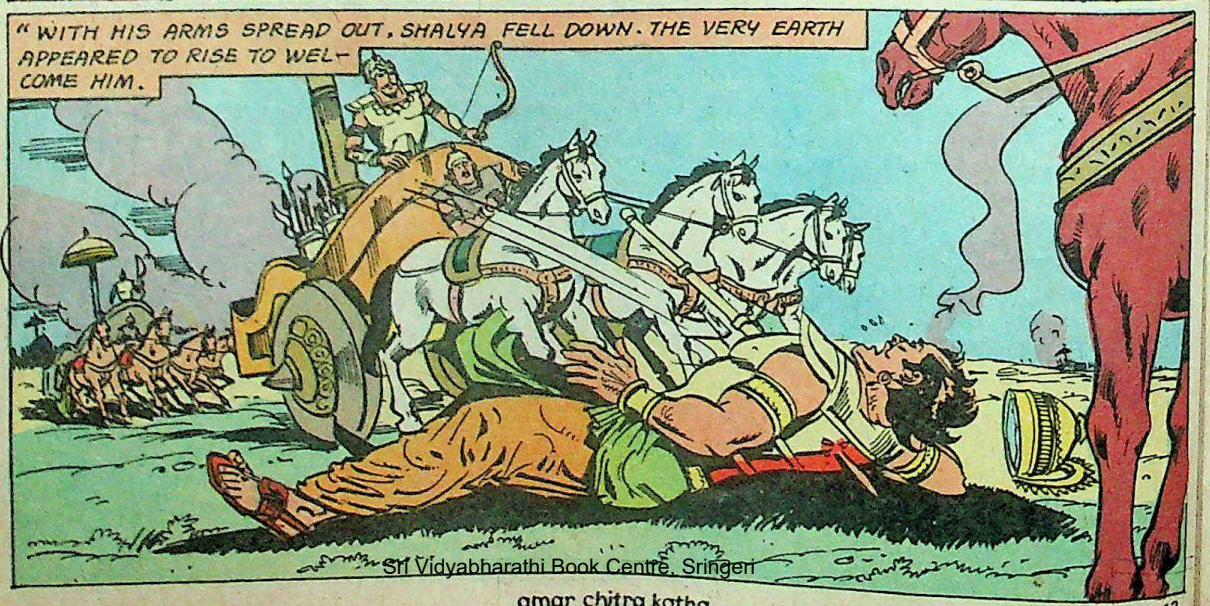
"THE FRIGHTENED KAURAVA SOLDIERS RAN PELL-MELL IN ALL DIRECTIONS. SHALYA CHARGED TOWARDS YUDHISHTHIRA.



"YUDHISHTHIRA PICKED UP A FIERCE LOOKING GOLDEN JAVELIN, STUDDED WITH GEMS, AND THREW IT AT SHALYA'S BROAD CHEST.



"WITH HIS ARMS SPREAD OUT, SHALYA FELL DOWN. THE VERY EARTH APPEARED TO RISE TO WELCOME HIM.



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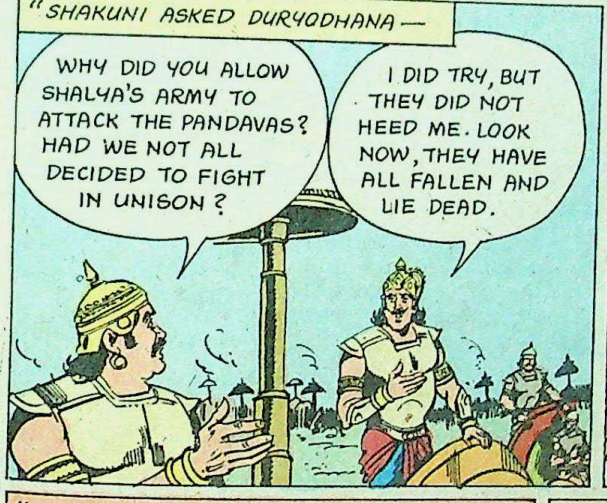
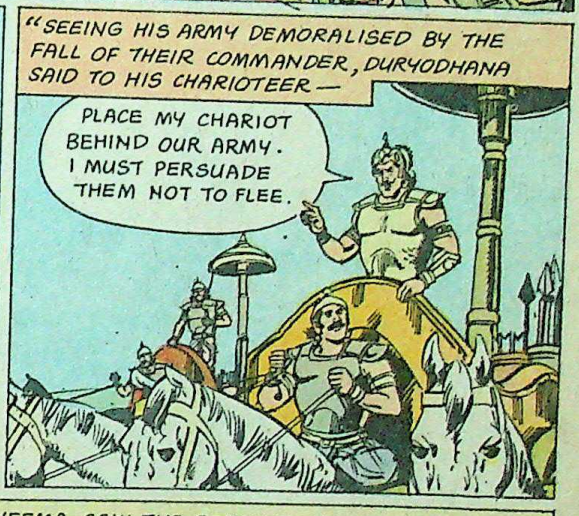
"IN HIS WARLIKE FERVOUR YUDHISHTHIRA CONTINUED TO ATTACK THE KAURAVA ARMY.

"SHALYA'S ARMY RALLIED TOGETHER TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS.

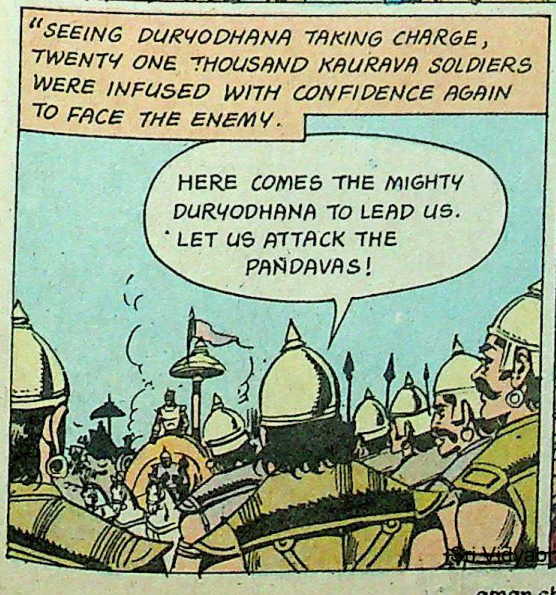
"SHAKUNI ASKED DURYODHANA —



"SEEING HIS ARMY DEMORALISED BY THE FALL OF THEIR COMMANDER, DURYODHANA SAID TO HIS CHARIOTEER —



"SEEING DURYODHANA TAKING CHARGE, TWENTY ONE THOUSAND KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE INFUSED WITH CONFIDENCE AGAIN TO FACE THE ENEMY.



"BHEEMA SAW THE ROARING MASS APPROACHING, AND QUICKLY DESCENDED FROM HIS CHARIOT. WITH HIS MACE, HE SOON MANAGED TO KILL MOST OF THEM.

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"THE KAURAVA KINGS TOO BEGAN TO FLEE. DURYODHANA CALLED OUT—

DO NOT RUN AWAY! YOU WILL SURELY BE KILLED IF ISOLATED. COME LET US FIGHT TOGETHER.

"PERSUADED BY DURYODHANA, THE KAURAVA KINGS PREPARED TO FACE THE ENEMY.

"ADDRESSING KRISHNA, ARJUNA SAID—

FOR EIGHTEEN DAYS, THIS BATTLE HAS BEEN GOING ON. TODAY I MUST DESTROY THE WHOLE KAURAVA ARMY AND PUT AN END TO IT.

"SOON, THE ARROWS, EMERGING IN A RAPID VOLLEY FROM THE GANDEEVA, COVERED THE ENTIRE BATTLEFIELD.

"TORTURED BY ARJUNA'S ARROWS, THE KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE AGAIN READY TO FLEE.

"DURYODHANA TRIED TO REPEL DHRISHTADYUMNA WHO WAS ATTACKING THE ARMY.

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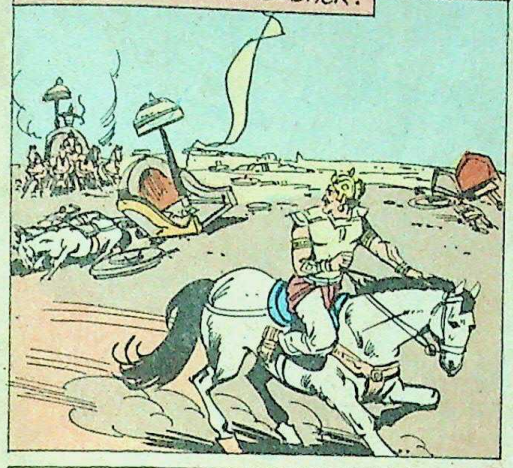
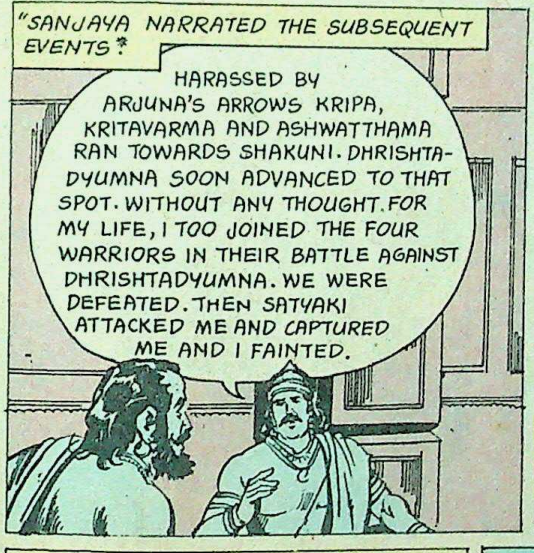
"WHEN DHRISHTADYUMNA KILLED HIS HORSES AND CHARIOTEER, DURYODHANA RODE AWAY ON HORSEBACK.



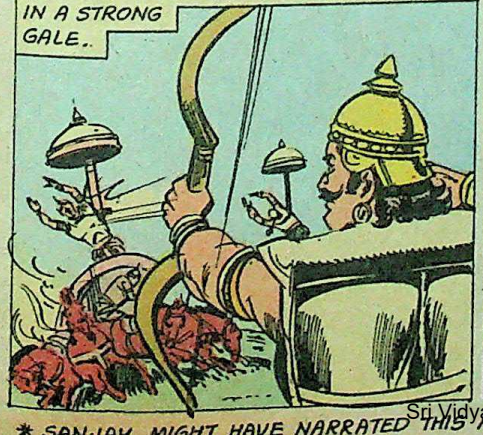
"ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA NOTED HIS ABSENCE.

"SANJAYA NARRATED THE SUBSEQUENT EVENTS*

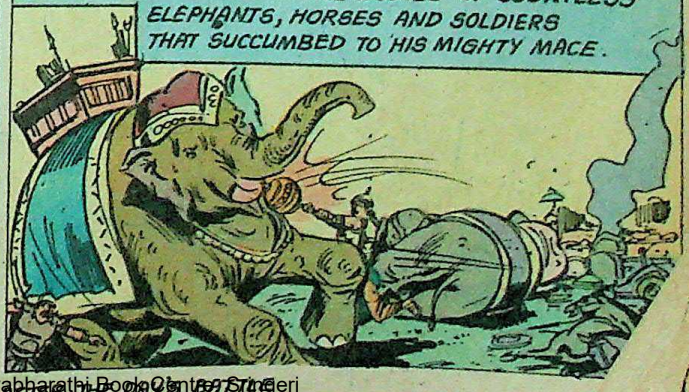


"AFTER DESTROYING OUR ENTIRE ARMY OF ELEPHANTS, BHEEMA ATTACKED DURYODHANA'S BROTHERS.

"UNITED THEY TRIED TO REPEL HIS ATTACK, BUT SOON THEY WERE STRUCK DOWN BY HIS ARROWS AND FELL LIKE TREES UPROOTED ON A MOUNTAINSIDE IN A STRONG GALE.



"ON THIS EIGHTEENTH DAY OF THE TERRIBLE WAR, BHEEMA WAS IN HIS ELEMENT. AFTER PUTTING TO DEATH ALMOST ALL OF THE KAURAVA BROTHERS, HE TURNED TO THE REST OF THE ENEMY ARMY. SOON THE BATTLEFIELD AROUND HIM WAS STREWN WITH THE BODIES OF COUNTLESS ELEPHANTS, HORSES AND SOLDIERS THAT SUCCUMBED TO HIS MIGHTY MACE.



* SANJAY MIGHT HAVE NARRATED THIS AFTER THE DAY'S BATTLE

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"KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —

BEHOLD DURYODHANA AND SUDARSHANA AMIDST THE HORSEMEN. KILL THEM!

O, KRISHNA, ONLY THESE TWO REMAIN OF ALL DHRITARASHTRA'S SONS. THEY TOO WILL DIE TODAY; REST ASSURED.

"ARJUNA THEN ATTACKED THE TRIGARTA ARMY, WHICH HAD BEEN HARASSING HIM ALL THESE DAYS.

"AT LAST HE KILLED SUSHARMA, THUS ENDING THE TRIGARTA SAGA.

"BHEEMA KILLED SUDARSHANA WITH SHARP ARROWS. DURYODHANA ALONE REMAINED AMONG THE KAURAVA BROTHERS.

"SHAKUNI AND HIS SON ULOOKA ATTACKED BHEEMA AND SAHADEVA.

"SO NUMEROUS WERE THE ARROWS SENT BY SAHADEVA IN RESPONSE THAT THEY COVERED THE SKY LIKE A SWARM OF LOCUSTS.

"ULOOKA SHOT SEVEN ARROWS AT BHEEMA AND SEVENTY AT SAHADEVA. SAHADEVA RETALIATED SUITABLY.

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"HE BEHEADED ULOOKA WITH HIS SPEAR. DHARMA'S EYES BRIMMED OVER WITH TEARS. WITH A DEEP SIGH HE RECALLED VIDURA'S WORDS.

"AN ENRAGED SHAKUNI ATTACKED SAHADEVA WITH VARIOUS WEAPONS, BUT HIS ATTEMPTS WERE OF NO AVAIL.

"HIS DAGGER WAS CUT—

"HIS BOW WAS BROKEN—

"HIS MACE WAS FELLED—

"AND HIS SPEAR FELL LIKE LIGHTNING FROM THE SKY.

"FILLED WITH FEAR, SHAKUNI AND HIS MEN RAN AWAY. THE PANDAVAS REJOICED IN THEIR VICTORY.

"SAHADEVA CHASED THE FLEEING SHAKUNI.

OH FOOL! BE A KSHATRIYA! FIGHT LIKE A MAN! YOU EVIL SHAKUNI, COME, PAY FOR YOUR CUNNING MOVES IN THAT GAME OF DICE.

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"SAHADEVA CONTINUED TO RAIN ARROWS AND TAUNTS AT SHAKUNI.

ALL THOSE WHO MOCKED US HAVE BEEN KILLED. ONLY YOU AND DURYODHANA REMAIN.

"THEN WITH A VICIOUS-LOOKING IRON SPEAR, BEDECKED WITH GOLDEN FEATHERS, SAHADEVA BEHEADED SHAKUNI.

"DRY-MOUTHED WITH TERROR, THE KAURAVA WARRIORS BEGAN TO RUN AWAY. THE PANDAVA SOLDIERS CHEERED SAHADEVA.

BRAVO! YOU HAVE KILLED THE WICKED SHAKUNI AND HIS SON IN BATTLE.

"ONCE AGAIN DURYODHANA PERSUADED HIS SOLDIERS TO RETURN, BUT THEY COULD NOT FACE THEIR FOES FOR LONG.

SOON THE KAURAVA FORCES WERE COMPLETELY DESTROYED. OF AN ARMY OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS, NOT A SINGLE SOLDIER REMAINED.

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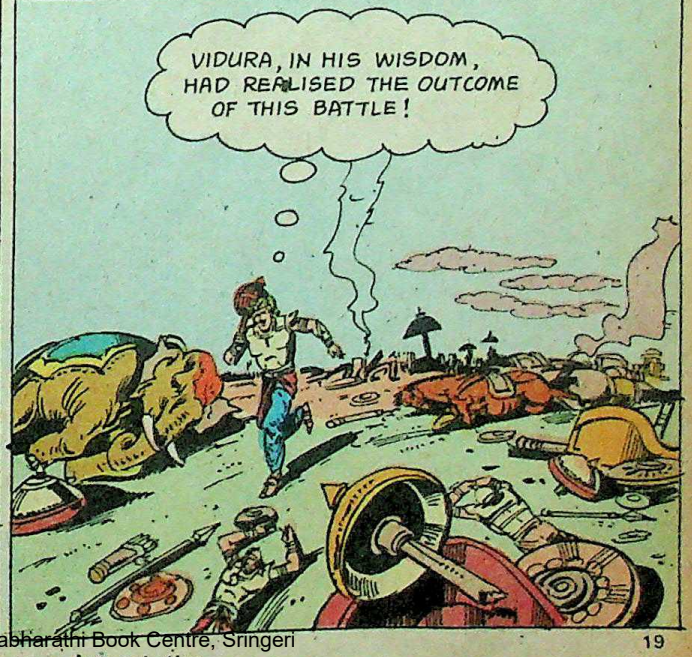
"DURYODHANA STOOD ALONE, WITHOUT AN ARMY OR A CHARIOT, FORLORN AND WOUNDED.

"AND THERE HE WAS, THE LONE WARRIOR FACING AN ARMY OF TWO THOUSAND CHARIOTS, SEVEN HUNDRED ELEPHANTS, FIVE THOUSAND HORSES AND TEN THOUSAND SOLDIERS WITH DHRISHTADYUMNA IN COMMAND. THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION REVERBERATED IN HIS EARS.

"WHEN HE LOOKED AROUND, HE SAW THE BATTLEFIELD STREWN WITH HIS FALLEN SOLDIERS. PETRIFIED WITH FEAR, HE TOOK TO HIS HEELS.

"A MIGHTY KING PROTECTED BY ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS NOW HAD JUST A MACE OVER HIS SHOULDER TO DEFEND HIM. HE RECALLED VIDURA'S WORDS.

VIDURA, IN HIS WISDOM, HAD REALISED THE OUTCOME OF THIS BATTLE!



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"RUNNING NORTHWARDS, HE CAME UPON A LAKE AND DECIDED TO IMMERSE HIMSELF IN IT.

"MEANWHILE, ON SAGE VYASA'S BIDDING, SATYAKI RELEASED SANJAYA AND LET HIM GO.

"WHILE SANJAYA WAS RETURNING TO THE CITY, HE ESPIED DURYODHANA, ALONE AND WOUNDED.

"SANJAYA RECALLED THE SCENE LATER.

I WAS DUMBSTRUCK WITH SHOCK AND SORROW AT HIS STATE. TO SEE A MIGHTY KING, WHOSE POMP AND GLORY WERE ONCE UNRIVALLED, REDUCED TO A PITIABLE CONDITION.

"SANJAYA NARRATED TO DURYODHANA THE TALE OF HIS CAPTURE AND SUBSEQUENT RELEASE.

VYASA TOLD ME THAT ONLY THREE MAHARATHIS* NOW REMAIN ON OUR SIDE.

"DURYODHANA SIGHED DEEPLY AND SAID —

THERE IS NO ONE BUT YOU WHOM I CAN CALL MY OWN NOW. CONVEY MY MESSAGE TO MY FATHER THAT I HAVE ENTERED THE DEPTHS OF THIS LAKE.

* THE HIGHEST HONOUR BESTOWED ON A WARRIOR.

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"DURYODHANA THEN ENTERED THE POOL AFTER MAKING THE WATER STAND STILL. JUST THEN, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE.

"WOUNDED AND WEARY, THEY WERE SURPRISED TO SEE SANJAYA.

SANJAYA! HOW FORTUNATE TO SEE YOU STILL ALIVE. DO YOU KNOW WHERE DURYODHANA IS?

"SANJAYA GAVE THEM DURYODHANA'S MESSAGE. ASHWATTHAMA LOOKED TOWARDS THE LAKE AND SAID —

ALAS! THE KING DOES NOT KNOW WE ARE ALIVE. TOGETHER WE CAN STILL FACE THE PANDAVAS.

"THE THREE WARRIORS WAITED AWHILE, BEMOANING DURYODHANA'S DECISION. BUT WHEN THEY HEARD THE SOUND OF SOLDIERS APPROACHING, THEY WENT AWAY.

"ALONG WITH SANJAYA, THEY RETURNED TO THE CAMP. ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE DEFEAT, THE GUARDS, ALREADY SHAKEN WITH WORRY, BROKE DOWN.

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"THE OLDER MEN OF THE CAMP, WHO WERE LOOKING AFTER THE LADIES, MADE PREPARATIONS TO RETURN TO HASTINAPURA.

"CRYING AND WAILING, THE WOMEN WERE ESCORTED TO THE CITY BY THE SENTRIES AND THE OLD MINISTERS.

"UNABLE TO BEAR THE LONELINESS OF THE DESERTED CAMP, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA RETURNED TO THE LAKESIDE.

"ON REACHING THE LAKE, THEY SOFTLY CALLED OUT TO DURYODHANA.

ARISE O KING! COME WITH US TO FIGHT YUDHISHTHIRA, WIN AND CONQUER, OR DIE IN GLORY.

YOU TOO HAVE DESTROYED MUCH OF THE PANDAVA ARMY. WE CAN EASILY SUBDUE THE REMAINING FEW, WOUNDED AND WEARY AS THEY ARE. COME, LET US FIGHT!

"DURYODHANA'S VOICE WAS HEARD FROM UNDER THE WATER.

I AM SO HAPPY YOU HAVE SURVIVED THIS FEARFUL WAR. JUST NOW, I AM EXHAUSTED AND WOUNDED. BUT TOMORROW, WE WILL CERTAINLY FIGHT AGAIN.

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"DELIGHTED AT DURYODHANA'S DECISION TO FIGHT, ASHWATTHAMA DECLARED—

GLORY TO YOU, O KING! WE WILL SURELY DESTROY THEM. I SWEAR I WILL KILL THEM AS SOON AS DAY DAWNS!

"SOME HUNTERS WHO HAPPENED TO COME TO THE LAKE TO QUENCH THEIR THIRST OVERHEARD THE CONVERSATION.

"THEY CONCLUDED THAT DURYODHANA WAS HIDDEN IN THE LAKE AND WAS BEING INVITED TO FIGHT AGAIN. TALKING IN WHISPERS, THEY SAID —

IF WE TELL YUDHISHTHIRA THAT DURYODHANA IS HIDING HERE, WE WILL SURELY BE REWARDED.

COME, LET US GO FAST. MAYBE WE WILL GET SO RICH WE WILL NEVER HAVE TO WORK AGAIN.

"MEANWHILE, YUDHISHTHIRA REALISED THAT DURYODHANA WAS MISSING AND SENT HIS SPIES IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

"WHEN THEY RETURNED WITHOUT ANY CLUE OF DURYODHANA'S WHEREABOUTS, YUDHISHTHIRA WAS WORRIED INDEED.

"JUST THEN THE HUNTERS ARRIVED AT THE CAMP. IGNORING THE PROTESTS OF THE GUARDS, THEY FORCED THEIR WAY IN.

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"THEY NARRATED THE EVENTS AT THE LAKESIDE TO BHEEMA WHO REWARDED THEM HANDSOMELY.

"BHEEMA WENT OVER TO YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID—

MY MEN HAVE LOCATED DURYODHANA. HE IS HIDING IN LAKE DWAIPAYANA.

GOOD! LET US GO THERE AT ONCE.

"WITH KRISHNA IN THE LEAD, THE PANDAVAS PROCEEDED TO DWAIPAYANA.

DURYODHANA HAS BEEN FOUND!

"FORGETTING THEIR FATIGUE, ARJUNA, BHEEMA, NAKULA, SAHADEVA, DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI AND SATYAKI WENT WITH YUDHISHTHIRA.

"WHEN THE SOUND OF APPROACHING ARMY REACHED THEIR EARS, ASHWATTHAMA, KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA TOLD DURYODHANA—

THE VICTORIOUS PANDAVAS APPEAR TO BE COMING HERE. ALLOW US TO GO, O KING.

AS YOU WISH.

"THE THREE WARRIORS MOVED AWAY AND RESTED UNDER A BANYAN TREE.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO DURYODHANA NOW? WHAT WILL THE PANDAVAS DO, I WONDER.

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"ON REACHING THE LAKE, YUDHISHTHIRA REMARKED—

LOOK, O KRISHNA, HOW THE WATERS HAVE BEEN STILLED BY DURYODHANA. LET HIM USE ALL HIS DEVIOUS WAYS, I WILL GET HIM IN THE END.

YOU TOO CAN USE ALL YOUR SKILLS AGAINST HIM.

"REASSURED BY KRISHNA, YUDHISHTHIRA CALLED OUT TO DURYODHANA.

YOU HAVE CAUSED THE DEATH OF ALL YOUR DEAR ONES, AND NOW YOU HIDE YOURSELF. WHERE IS YOUR PRIDE? YOUR VALOUR? YOUR PROWESS IN ARCHERY? ARISE AND FIGHT LIKE A KSHATRIYA, O KING!

"DURYODHANA RESPONDED FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE WATER —

I HAVE NO CHARIOT, NO WEAPON, NO ARMY. YET IT IS NOT FEAR OR SORROW THAT HAS BROUGHT ME HERE. I AM JUST TOO TIRED NOW. LET YOUR MEN REST AWHILE TOO. TOMORROW WE WILL RESUME FIGHTING.

"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED—

WE HAVE RESTED ENOUGH. COME OUT AND FIGHT. CONQUER US AND RULE, OR BE KILLED LIKE A WARRIOR.

"DURYODHANA SAID—

WITH ALL MY LOVED ONES DEAD, I HAVE NO DESIRE TO RULE. TAKE OVER THIS LAND. I WILL RETIRE TO THE FOREST IN BARK AND DEERSKIN.

"YUDHISHTHIRA SHOUTED IN ANGER—

DO NOT TWITTER USELESSLY LIKE A BIRD. WHAT RIGHT HAVE YOU NOW TO GIFT THIS LAND TO ME? WOULD A PROUD KSHATRIYA LIKE ME ACCEPT CHARITY? I WILL CLAIM THE KINGDOM BY DEFEATING YOU IN BATTLE. COME AND FIGHT.

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"DURYODHANA FLAILED AROUND HIS ARMS IN FRUSTRATION, SIGHED REPEATEDLY, BUT REMAINED INSIDE. HE SAID —

YOU HAVE YOUR ARMY, CHARIOTS AND WEAPONS. I AM ALONE, OUTNUMBERED AND WITHOUT A CHARIOT. HOW CAN I POSSIBLY FIGHT...

...IT IS NOT FAIR FOR AN ARMY TO FIGHT AN ISOLATED, WEAPONLESS, ARMOURLESS, FATIGUED MAN. I CAN FIGHT ANY ONE OF YOU AT A TIME, I CAN EVEN KILL YOU IF WE FIGHT RIGHTEOUSLY LIKE TRUE KSHATRIYAS.

"YUDHISHTHIRA REPLIED SARCASTICALLY —

OH! I AM GLAD TO HEAR YOU KNOW THE KSHATRIYA CODE OF CONDUCT. BUT ANYWAY, SINCE YOU ARE READY TO FIGHT, WE WILL ABIDE BY YOUR WISH. CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON AND FIGHT ANYONE OF US. THE REST WILL JUST BE SPECTATORS.

"DURYODHANA SAID —

IN THAT CASE, I CHOOSE MY MACE. LET ANYONE OF YOUR WARRIORS COME FORWARD TO OPPOSE ME.

COME, LET US SEE YOUR VALOUR, YOUR MANHOOD. I AM SURE THAT EVEN IF LORD INDRA COMES TO YOUR AID TODAY, YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ALIVE.

"THUS TAUNTED, DURYODHANA ROSE UP AND APPEARED ON THE SURFACE LIKE THE RISING SUN. HE HAD AN IRON MACE IN HIS HAND.

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"THRILLED TO SEE DURYODHANA EMERGE AT LAST, THE PANDAVAS REJOICED AND CLASPED ONE ANOTHER'S HANDS.

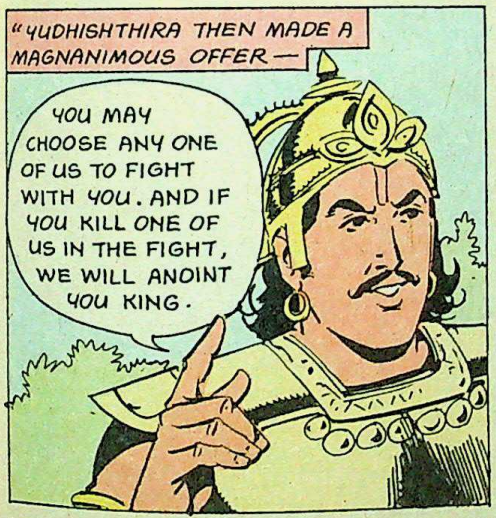
"DURYODHANA DECLARED—

I WILL FIGHT ALL OF YOU BUT ONE AT A TIME. YOU RIGHTEOUS WARRIORS KNOW THE RULES OF CONDUCT.

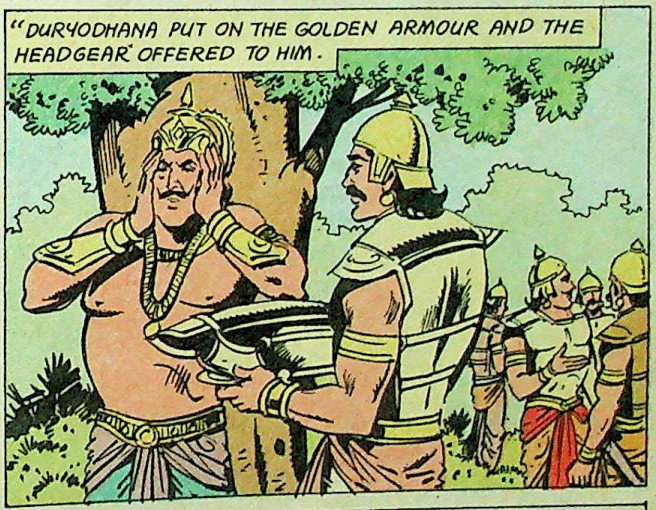
BUT DID YOU NOT KNOW THE RULES OF CONDUCT WHEN YOU SURROUNDED ABHIMANYU? ONLY WHEN THEY FACE A PROBLEM THEMSELVES, DO MEN QUOTE FROM LAW BOOKS.

"YUDHISHTHIRA THEN MADE A MAGNANIMOUS OFFER—

YOU MAY CHOOSE ANY ONE OF US TO FIGHT WITH YOU. AND IF YOU KILL ONE OF US IN THE FIGHT, WE WILL ANOINT YOU KING.

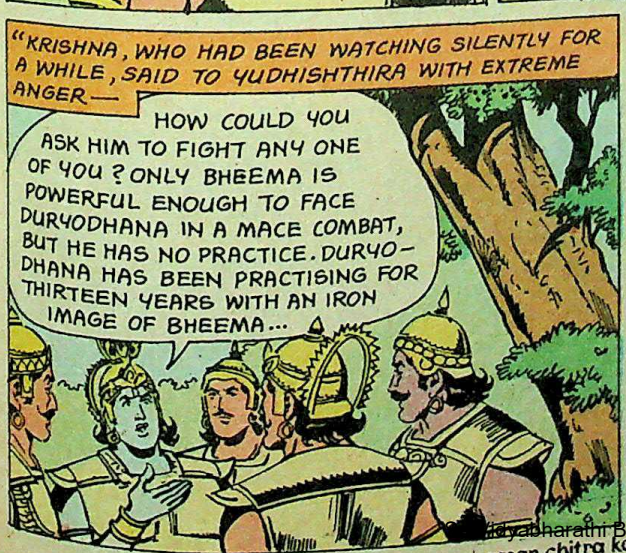


"DURYODHANA PUT ON THE GOLDEN ARMOUR AND THE HEADGEAR OFFERED TO HIM.

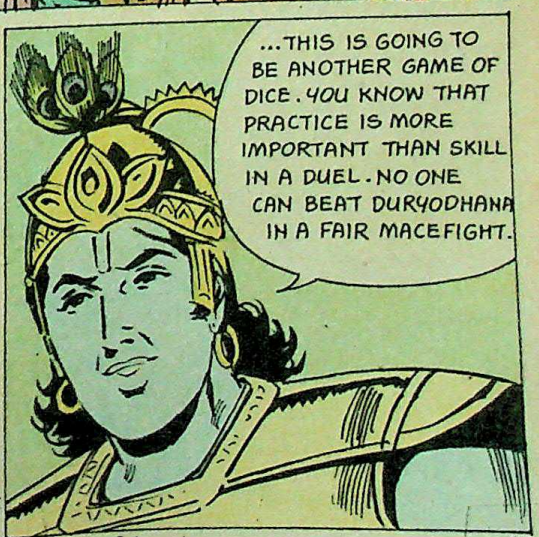


"KRISHNA, WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING SILENTLY FOR A WHILE, SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH EXTREME ANGER—

HOW COULD YOU ASK HIM TO FIGHT ANY ONE OF YOU? ONLY BHEEMA IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO FACE DURYODHANA IN A MACE COMBAT, BUT HE HAS NO PRACTICE. DURYODHANA HAS BEEN PRACTISING FOR THIRTEEN YEARS WITH AN IRON IMAGE OF BHEEMA...



...THIS IS GOING TO BE ANOTHER GAME OF DICE. YOU KNOW THAT PRACTICE IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SKILL IN A DUEL. NO ONE CAN BEAT DURYODHANA IN A FAIR MACEFIGHT.



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"BHEEMA CAME FORWARD AND REASSURED KRISHNA —

DO NOT WORRY, O KRISHNA. I WILL DEFINITELY KILL DURYODHANA TODAY.

"KRISHNA WAS OVERJOYED.

YES! BHEEMA. IT IS YOU WHO KILLED THE OTHER SONS OF DHRITARASHTRA. NOW KILL DURYODHANA AND PLACE THE WORLD AT YUDHISHTHIRA'S FEET. BUT TAKE CARE! DURYODHANA HAS BOTH SKILL AND EXPERIENCE.

"BHEEMA WENT UP TO DURYODHANA AND DECLARED —

RECALL ALL YOUR MISDEEDS, O DURYODHANA. THE TORTURES AND INSULTS YOU HURLED AT US. BECAUSE OF YOU, BHEESHMA, DRONA, KARNA AND SHALYA LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES. TODAY IT IS YOUR TURN.

WHAT IS THE USE OF BOASTING. COME AND FIGHT.

"THE FIGHT WAS ABOUT TO START, WHEN BALARAMA, WHO HAD BEEN AWAY ON A PILGRIMAGE, ARRIVED THERE. KRISHNA AND THE PANDAVAS RUSHED TO GREET HIM.

"KRISHNA SAID —

COME AND WATCH YOUR DISCIPLES IN ACTION.

I HAVE RETURNED AFTER FORTY TWO DAYS ON PILGRIMAGE. I AM ANXIOUS TO SEE MY PUPILS.

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"BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA RAISED THEIR MACES IN A GREETING TO BALARAMA.

"AFTER DESCRIBING THE PILGRIMAGE AT LENGTH, BALARAMA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA.

I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT SAMANTAPANCHAKA IS THE MOST HOLY SPOT.

IT IS QUITE CLOSE BY. LET THE DUEL TAKE PLACE THERE. FOR THOSE WHO DIE THERE ARE SURE TO ATTAIN HEAVEN.

SO BE IT!

"ALL OF THEM PROCEEDED THERE. DURYODHANA, WITH HIS HEAD HELD HIGH AND MACE ALOFT, WALKED PROUDLY AMONG THE PANDAVAS. SOON THEY REACHED THE BANKS OF THE RIVER SARASWATI. BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA GOT READY FOR THE DUEL.

"LIKE TWO ENRAGED ELEPHANTS, THEY FACED EACH OTHER. TWO HANDSOME MEN, WITH MACES UPRAISED, BENT ON DESTRUCTION.

"ADDRESSING YUDHISHTHIRA, DURYODHANA SAID PROUDLY—

BRAVE WARRIORS! SIT NEAR US AND WITNESS THE FIGHT.

"SO THEY ALL SAT AROUND THE ARENA. THE BLUE-CLAD BALARAMA LOOKED LIKE THE RESPLENDENT MOON.

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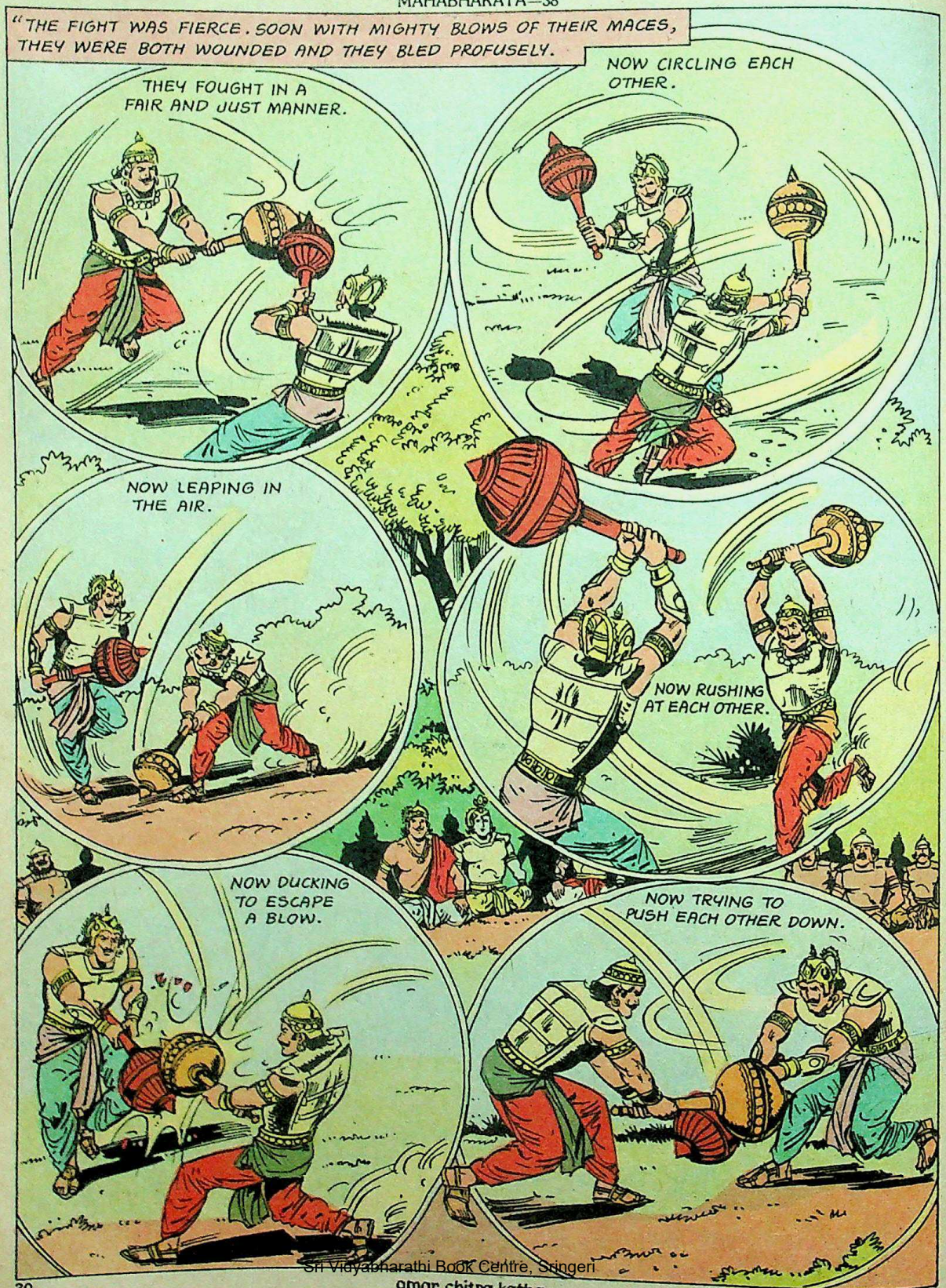

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"WHILE BALARAMA PROUDLY WATCHED HIS PUPILS, ARJUNA ASKED KRISHNA ANXIOUSLY.

TELL ME, KRISHNA, WHO IS THE SUPERIOR OF THE TWO?

BOTH OF THEM ARE TRAINED BY MY BROTHER BALARAMA. BHEEMA IS MORE POWERFUL BUT DURYODHANA IS FAR AHEAD IN SKILL AND EXPERIENCE.

IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO BEAT DURYODHANA IN A FAIR FIGHT. BHEEMA MAY HAVE TO RESORT TO UNFAIR MEANS. REMEMBER HIS VOW TO BREAK DURYODHANA'S THIGHS?

"BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA WERE MEANWHILE FIGHTING FIERCELY. DURYODHANA SPRANG UP IN THE AIR TO DODGE A BLOW.

"CATCHING BHEEMA'S EYE, ARJUNA MEANINGFULLY STRUCK HIS OWN THIGH FORCEFULLY.

"CATCHING THE HINT, AND REMEMBERING HIS VOW, BHEEMA WAITED FOR A CHANCE. AFTER THE NEXT BOUT IN WHICH DURYODHANA ALMOST MADE HIM FAINT, BHEEMA TRIED TO ANTICIPATE HIS ADVERSARY'S NEXT MOVE.

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"WHEN DURYODHANA JUMPED UP NEXT TIME, BHEEMA HIT OUT FORCEFULLY AT HIS THIGHS.

"WITH HIS THIGHS BROKEN, DURYODHANA COLLAPSED TO THE GROUND.

"THE ELATED PANDAVAS CAME CLOSER TO SEE THE FALLEN HERO. PROUDLY BHEEMA KICKED DURYODHANA'S CROWN AND PUT HIS FOOT ON HIS HEAD.

YOU WICKED MAN! YOU CHEAT! SUFFER FOR ALL THE INSULTS YOU HURLED AT US.

"YUDHISHTHIRA STEPPED FORWARD.

ENOUGH! BHEEMA. YOU HAVE FULFILLED YOUR VOW. DO NOT INSULT HIM SO. AFTER ALL HE IS OUR BROTHER, A KING AND THE LORD OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS.

REPRIMANDING BHEEMA, YUDHISHTHIRA WENT TO DURYODHANA TO TELL HIM HOW LUCKY HE WAS TO DIE AND ATTAIN HEAVEN WHILE THEY WERE DESTINED TO LIVE ON IN A WORLD BEREFT OF SO MANY LOVED ONES. THUS THE RIGHTEOUS YUDHISHTHIRA BEMOANED THE FALL OF DURYODHANA.

"THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, MAHABHARATA.

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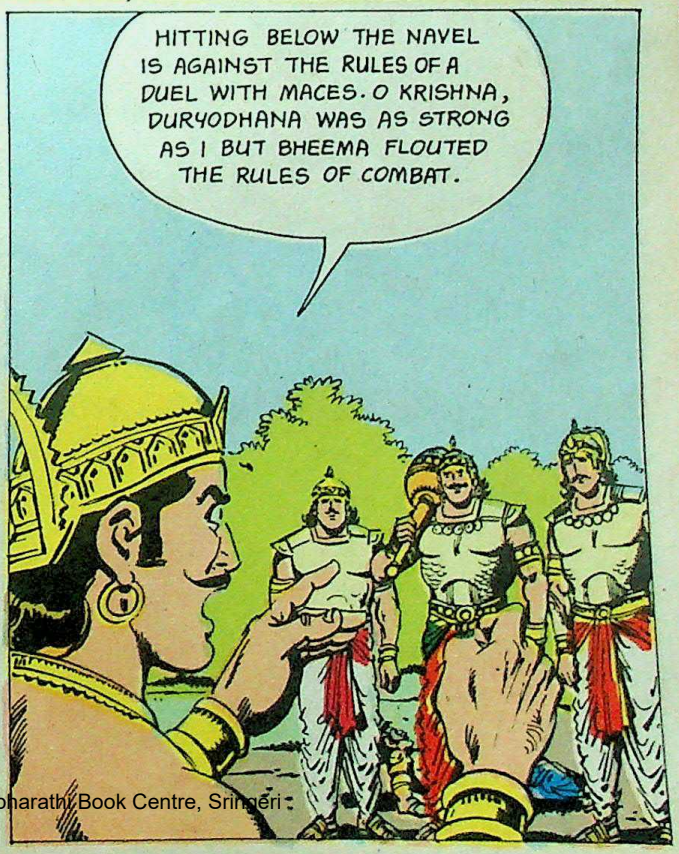
Mahabharata – 39

AFTER THE WAR



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"IN HIS RAGE, HE RUSHED AT BHEEMA WITH HIS PLOUGH* HELD ALOFT.

"KRISHNA TRIED TO RESTRAIN HIM.

THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH A DISPLAY OF ANGER AGAINST BHEEMA. REMEMBER HOW HE HAD VOWED TO CRUSH DURYODHANA'S THIGH WHEN DRAUPADI WAS DISGRACED?

YOU CANNOT TOLERATE THIS SINGLE OFFENCE. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW THE KAURAVAS KILLED ABHIMANYU? COME, CALM YOURSELF, DEAR BROTHER.

"BALARAMA, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT BE PACIFIED.

I DECLARE BHEEMA'S CONDUCT IN THE WAR AS UNWORTHY OF A KSHATRIYA.

"BALARAMA ASCENDED HIS CHARIOT AND LEFT IN A HUFF.

Sri Vidyabharati

* THE PLOUGH WAS BALARAMA'S PERSONAL WEAPON

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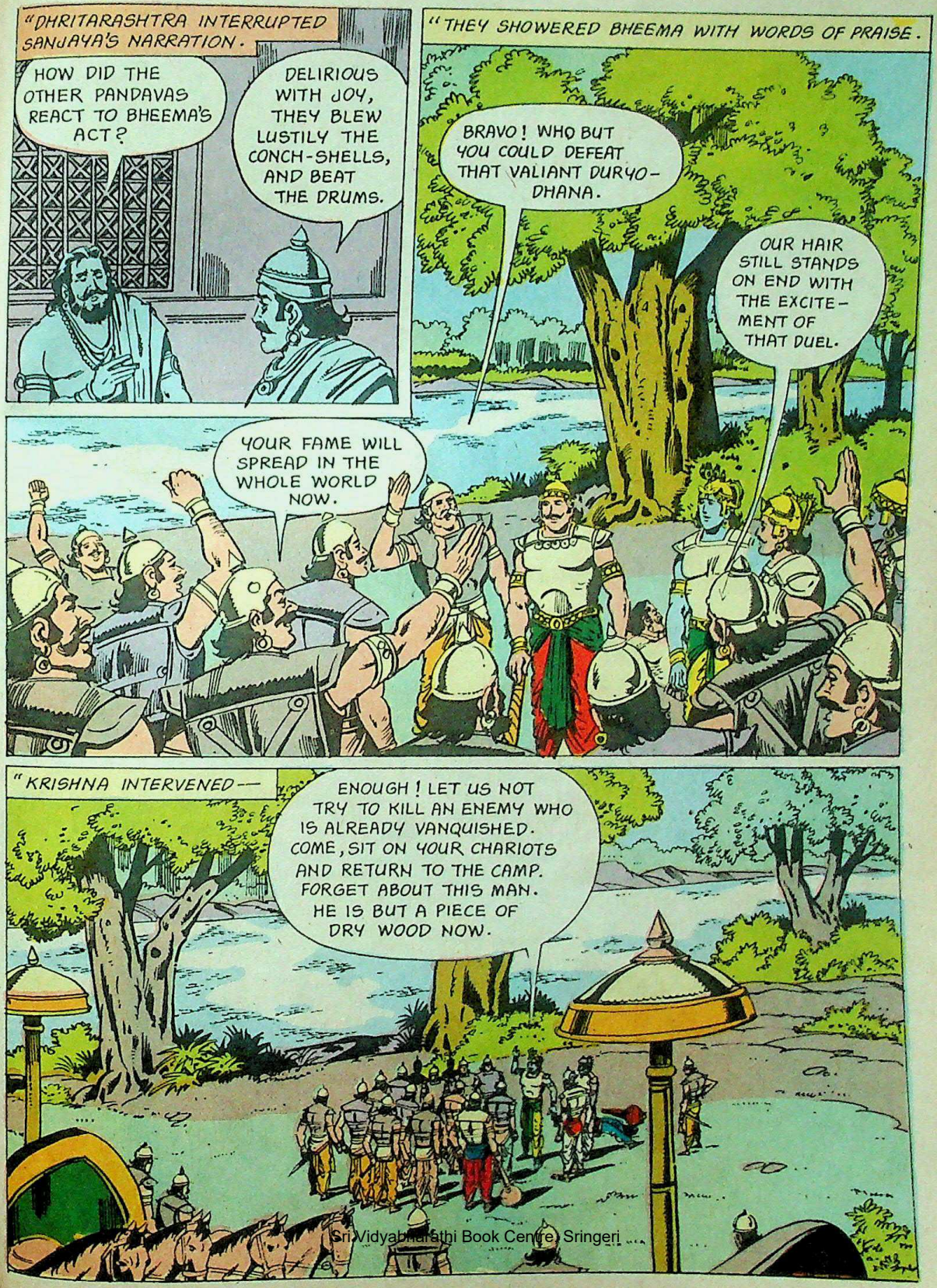

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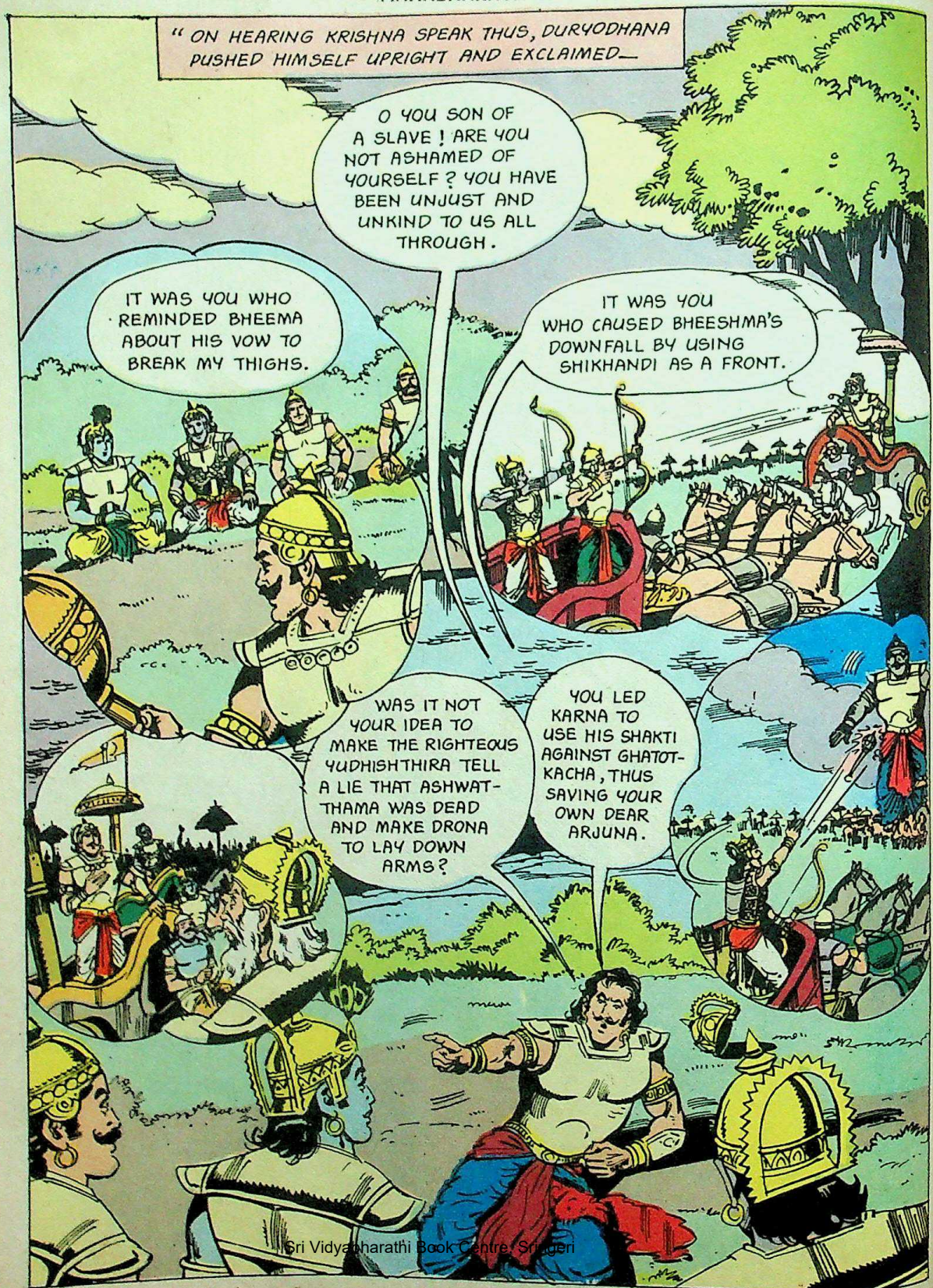

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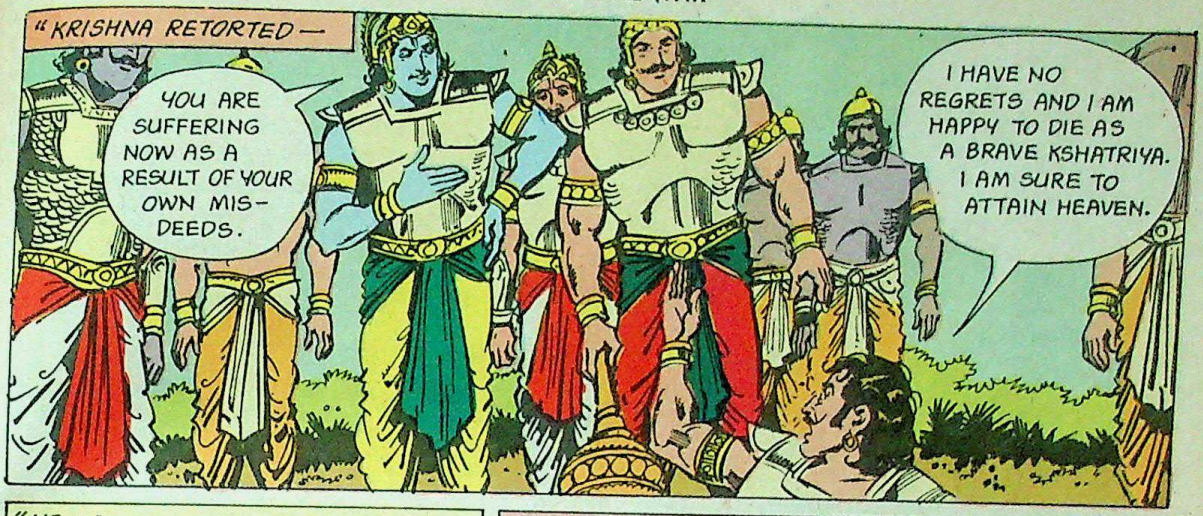

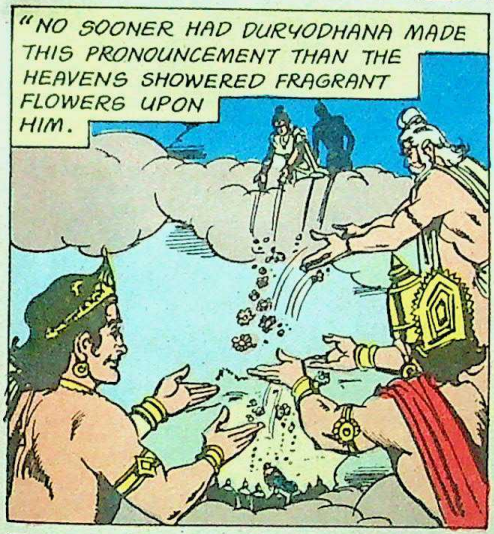

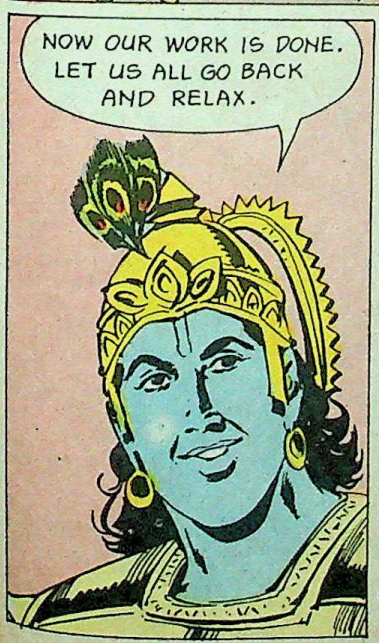

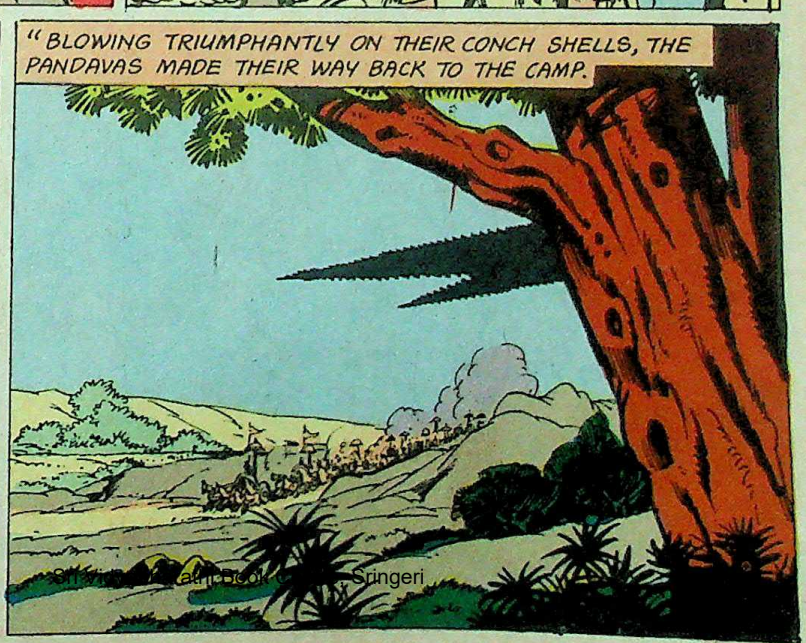

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"THEY FIRST WENT TO DURYODHANA'S QUARTERS, NOW DESERTED AND DESOLATE.

"THE OTHERS GOT DOWN FROM THEIR CHARIOTS. KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —

REMOVE YOUR GANDEEVA AND THE CELESTIAL QUIVERS FROM THE CHARIOT AND COME DOWN.

"AS SOON AS KRISHNA DESCENDED FROM THE CHARIOT, THE MONKEY WHICH HAD ADORNED THE BANNER SO FAR SUDDENLY VANISHED.

"AND THE GREAT CHARIOT, WHICH HAD WITHSTOOD THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS OF DRONA AND KARNA, WENT UP IN FLAMES.

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"IN AN INSTANT THE ENTIRE CHARIOT INCLUDING THE HORSES AND REINS WAS REDUCED TO ASHES.

"WHILE THE REST OF THE PANDAVAS WATCHED THIS MIRACLE WITH AWE AND FEAR, ARJUNA FELL AT KRISHNA'S FEET.

O KRISHNA,! HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? HOW COULD THE CHARIOT SUDDENLY BE BURNT DOWN?

"KRISHNA GENTLY EXPLAINED —

THIS CHARIOT HAD ALREADY BEEN BURNT AND CHARRED BY THE REPEATED ONSLAUGHT OF THE ENEMY'S WEAPONS. BUT AS LONG AS I SAT IN IT, IT APPEARED TO BE INTACT.

NOW THAT YOUR MIGHTY TASK IS COMPLETED, I HAVE ABANDONED IT. SO THE CHARIOT IS NOW A HEAP OF ASHES.

"SMILING, KRISHNA THEN EMBRACED YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID —

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE EMERGED VICTORIOUS IN THIS WAR. REMEMBER HOW YOU HAD ASKED ME TO PROTECT ARJUNA? HERE HE HAS EMERGED UNSCATHED FROM THE TERRIBLE WAR AND IS SAFE AND SOUND WITH ALL HIS BROTHERS.

IT IS BY YOUR GRACE, O LORD, THAT WE HAVE WON THIS WAR.

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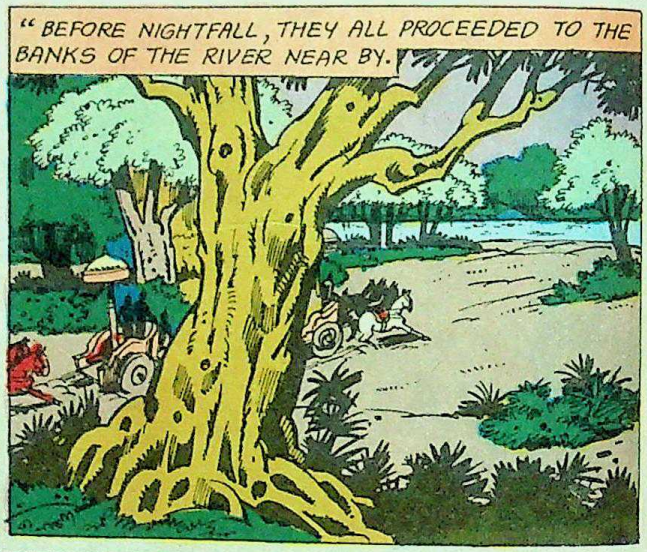

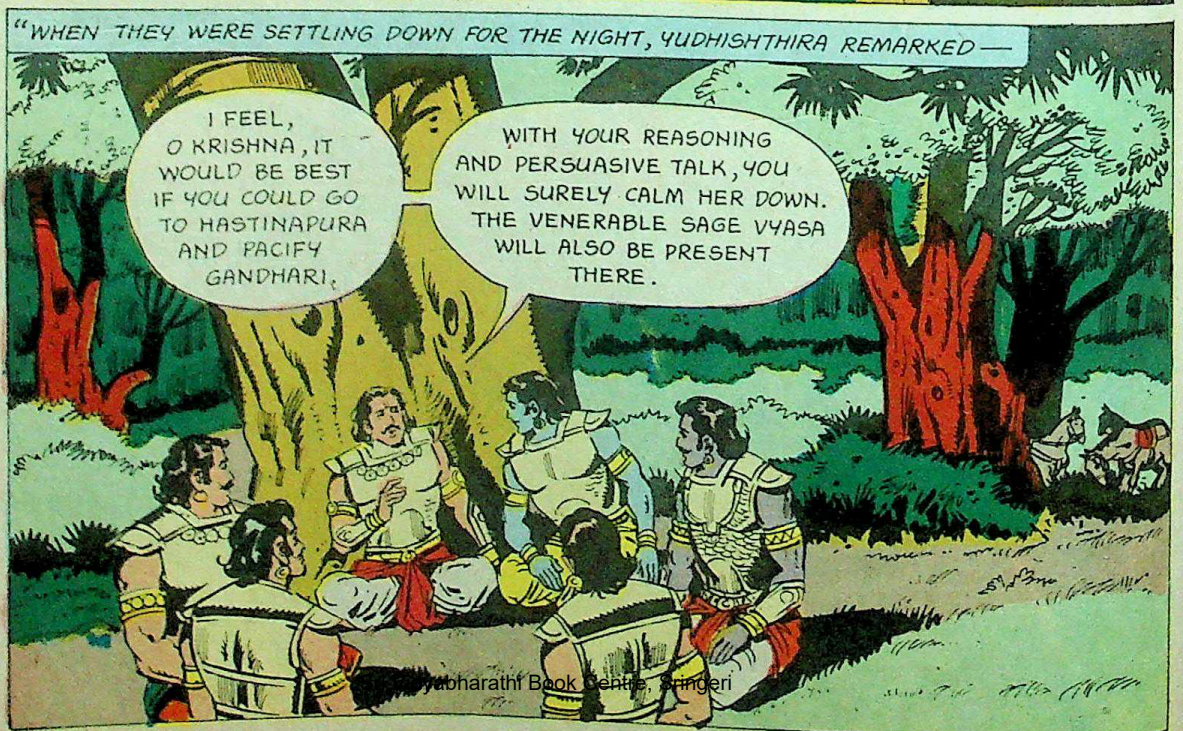

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"KRISHNA READILY AGREED AND LEFT FOR HASTINAPURA ON HIS CHARIOT.

JANAMEJAYA INTERRUPTED VAISHAMPAYANA —

WAS IT NECESSARY TO SEND KRISHNA FOR THIS TASK ?

YES, IT WAS. YUDHISHTHIRA REALISED HOW GANDHARI WOULD HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF HER SONS. UNASSUAGED, THAT VIRTUOUS WOMAN'S ANGER COULD ANNIHILATE THE WHOLE WORLD. THAT IS WHY YUDHISHTHIRA REQUESTED THE LORD HIMSELF TO RUSH TO HASTINAPURA AND SAVE THE SITUATION.

"ON REACHING HASTINAPURA, KRISHNA WENT TO DHRITARASHTRA'S PALACE.

"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO THE AGED KING, HE GREETED SAGE VYASA AND GANDHARI WHO WERE ALSO SEATED THERE.

"HOLDING DHRITARASHTRA'S HAND IN HIS OWN, KRISHNA WEPT IN SYMPATHY. THEN CONTROLLING HIS EMOTIONS, HE SAID AFTER A WHILE —

BELIEVE ME, THE PANDAVAS DID TRY THEIR BEST TO PREVENT THIS DESTRUCTION OF YOUR RACE.

THEY BORE ALL THE INSULTS HEAPED ON THEM BY THE KAURAVAS AND SPENT SO MANY YEARS IN THE FOREST.

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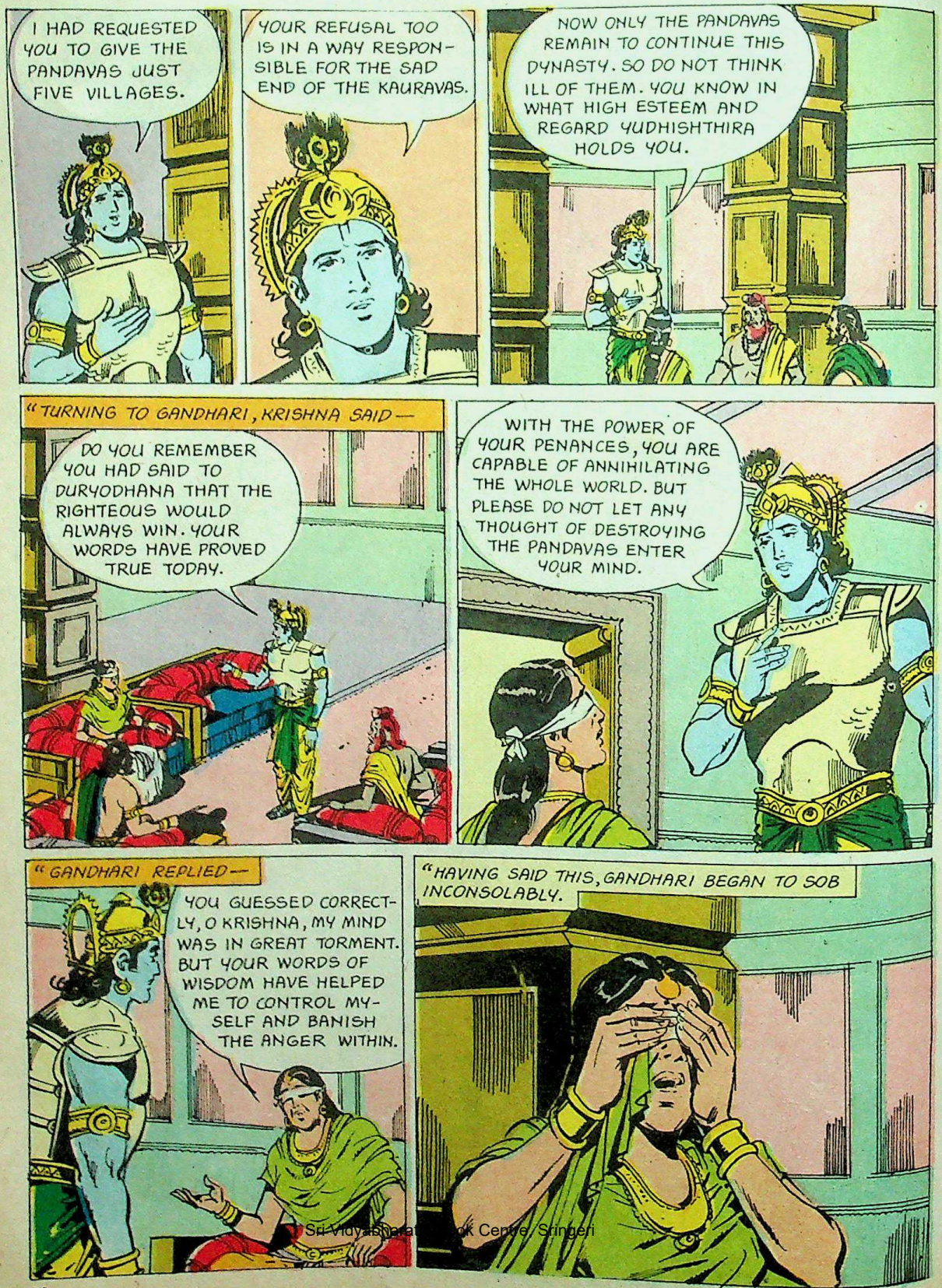

Sri Vidyaranya... Centre, Sringeri

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"KRISHNA SAT FOR A WHILE TRYING TO CONSOLE THE AGED KING AND THE DESOLATE MOTHER WITH HIS SOOTHING WORDS AND GENTLE MANNER.

"JUST THEN, HE DIVINED THE EVIL PLOT EVOLVING IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. STANDING UP WITH A START, HE SAID TO SAGE VYASA.

I MUST TAKE YOUR LEAVE NOW. ASHWATTHAMA HAS THOUGHT OF A WICKED PLAN TO DESTROY THE PANDAVAS.

"BOTH GANDHARI AND DHRITARASHTRA ASKED HIM TO GO.

YES, YOU MUST GO AND PROTECT THE PANDAVAS. WE WILL MEET YOU LATER.

"KRISHNA THEN RETURNED TO THE PANDAVAS AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.

...SO WE MUST BE CAREFUL AND ALERT TONIGHT.

"MEANWHILE, ACCOMPANIED BY KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA ASHWATTHAMA RUSHED TO SEE THE DYING DURYODHANA.

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Trichy

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"THEY FOUND DURYODHANA BLEEDING PROFUSELY AND TOSSING AND TURNING HELPLESSLY IN AGONY.

"QUICKLY THEY GOT OFF FROM THE CHARIOT AND SAT BESIDE HIM.

"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THE KING IN THIS PATHETIC STATE. WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES, HE SAID—

OH! WHAT IS THIS WORLD WHERE A KING OF YOUR MIGHT AND STATURE CAN BE LEFT TO ROLL IN THE DUST.

WHERE IS YOUR GREAT ARMY, YOUR ROYAL UMBRELLA, YOUR POMP AND VALOUR? SURELY NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN BE RELIED UPON. IT IS TRANSIENT AND EPHEMERAL.

"DURYODHANA TOO BROKE DOWN AT ASHWATTHAMA'S DISPLAY OF SORROW.

EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD IS DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION. APPARENTLY MY MOMENT OF DOOM HAS ALSO COME. HENCE YOU FIND ME IN THIS STATE.

YET I AM HAPPY THAT NEVER ONCE DID I TURN MY BACK IN WAR. IT WAS ONLY BY CHEATING THAT THE ENEMY COULD DESTROY ME. I HAVE BEEN TRUE TO MY DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA. SO DO NOT GRIEVE FOR ME, FRIENDS.

Sri Vidyabharathi Foundation, Sringeri

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"THE TEARS IN DURYODHANA'S EYES FILLED ASHWATTHAMA WITH RAGE.

EVEN MY FATHER'S DEATH BROUGHT ABOUT BY DECEIT DID NOT HURT ME AS MUCH AS YOUR DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF THOSE WICKED PANDAVAS...

"CLENCHING HIS FISTS HE SAID—

...I SWEAR TO YOU BY EVERYTHING SACRED THAT I WILL SEND ALL THE PANCHALAS AND THE PANDAVAS TO DEATH TONIGHT. GIVE ME YOUR PERMISSION TO DO SO.

"DURYODHANA WAS TOUCHED. ADDRESSING KRIPA, HE SAID—

ACHARYA, PLEASE BRING WATER IN A VESSEL.

"WHEN KRIPACHARYA DID SO, DURYODHANA SAID FORMALLY—

I REQUEST YOU TO INSTALL ASHWATTHAMA AS THE COMMANDER OF OUR ARMY.

Bharatha Book Centre, Sringeri

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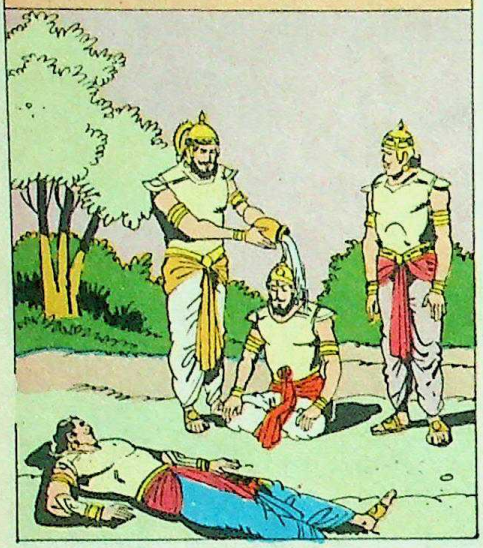
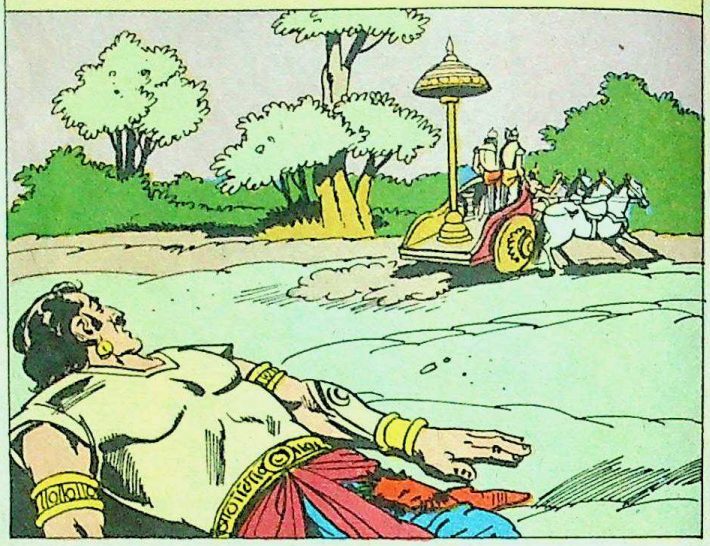
"KRIPACHARYA POURED THE WATER OVER ASHWATTHAMA AS A RITUAL OF THE CEREMONIAL BATH.

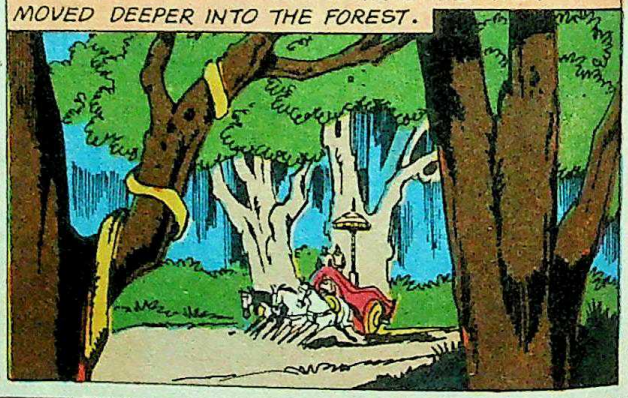


"ASHWATTHAMA EMBRACED THE PROSTRATE DURYODHANA IN FAREWELL AND THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE KING TO SPEND THE DARK NIGHT ALONE.

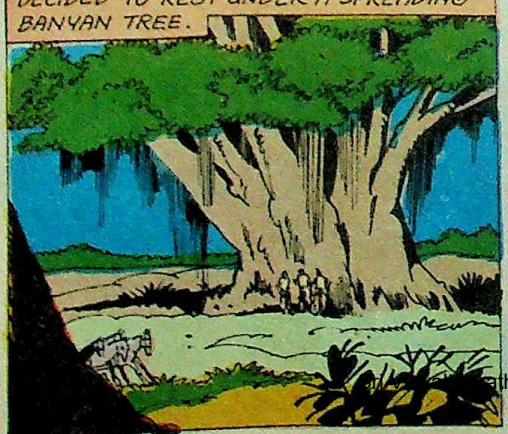


"SOON THEY SIGHTED THE CAMP, BUT WARY OF THE PANDAVAS, THEY HALTED IN A NEARBY FOREST.

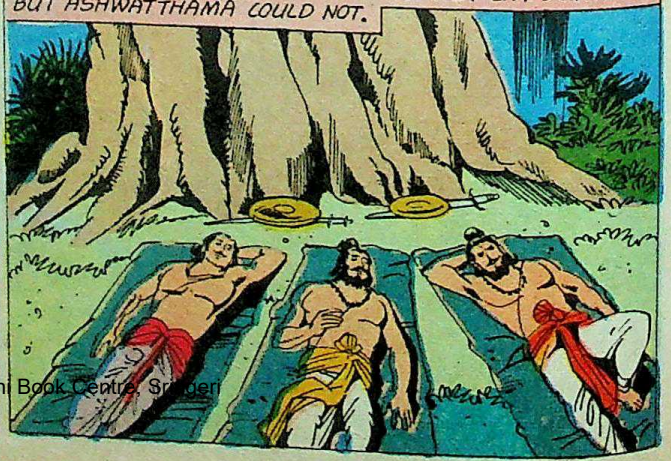
"THEY RESTED FOR A WHILE. SOON THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION FROM THE PANDAVA CAMP PUT FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS AND THEY MOVED DEEPER INTO THE FOREST.



"SAFE IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST, THEY REFRESHED THEIR HORSES AND DECIDED TO REST UNDER A SPREADING BANYAN TREE.



"WEARY AND WOUNDED, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA FELL ASLEEP AS SOON AS THEY LAY DOWN. BUT ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT.



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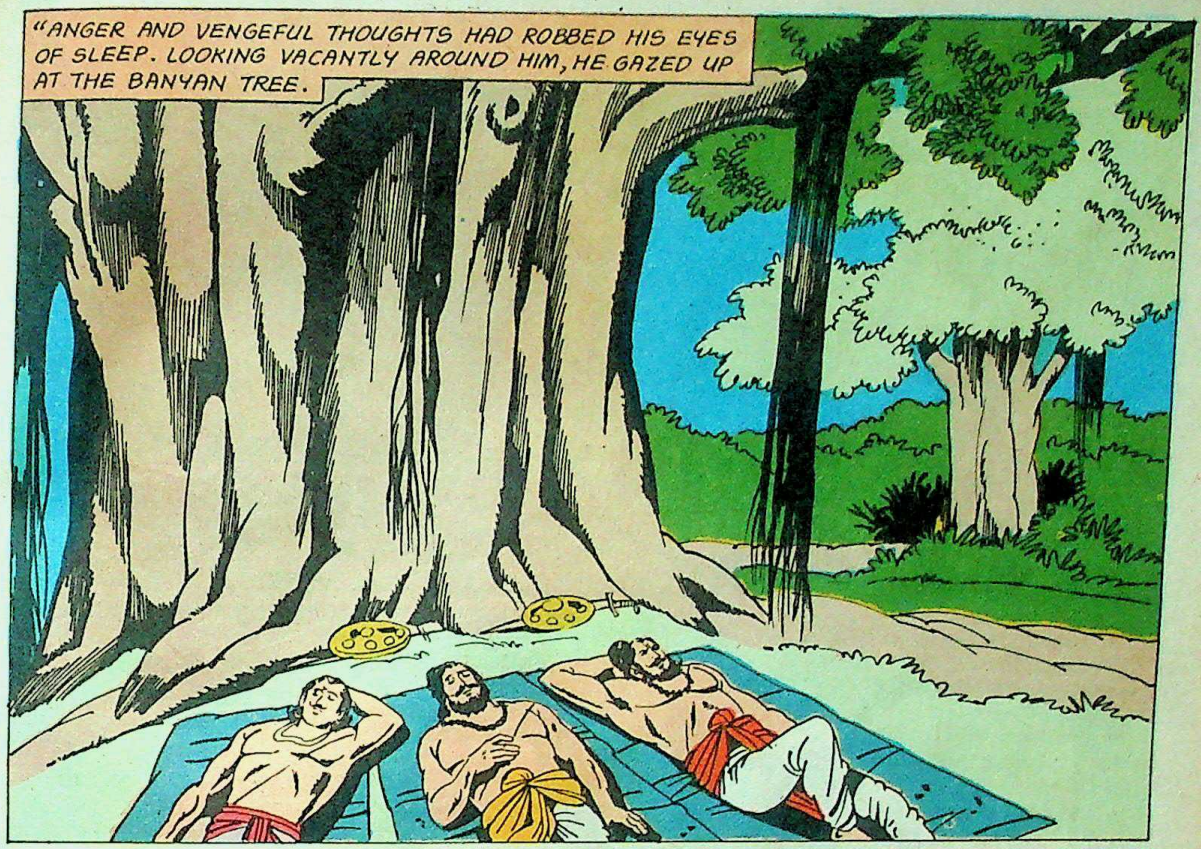

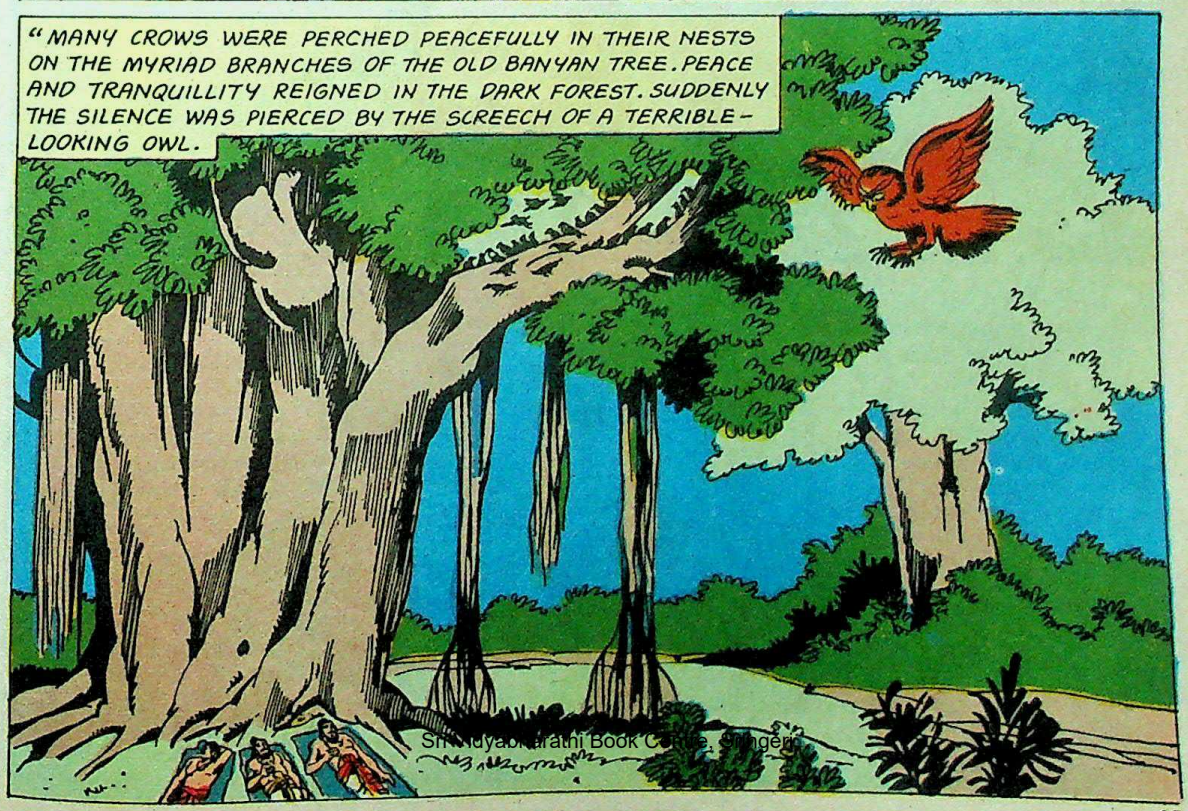

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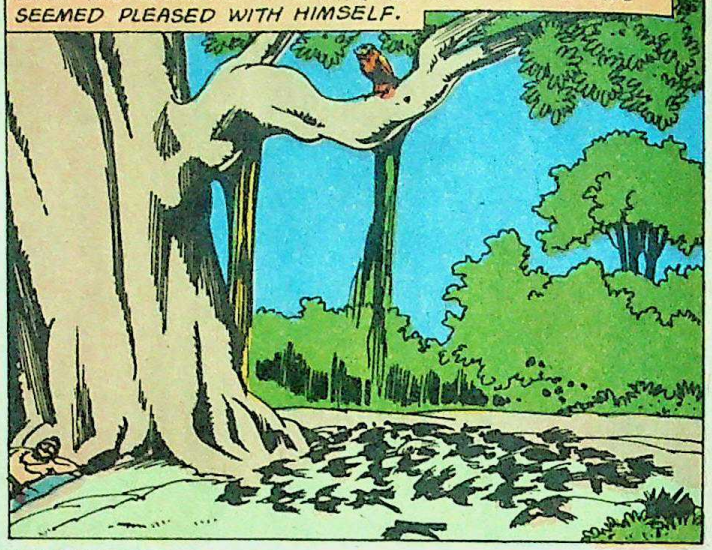
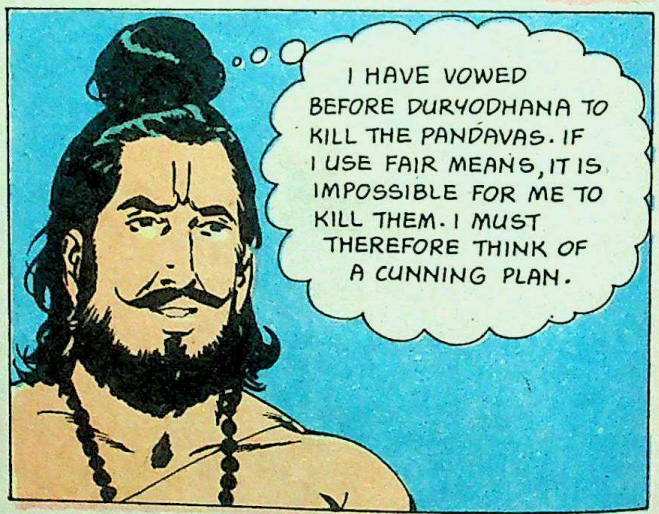
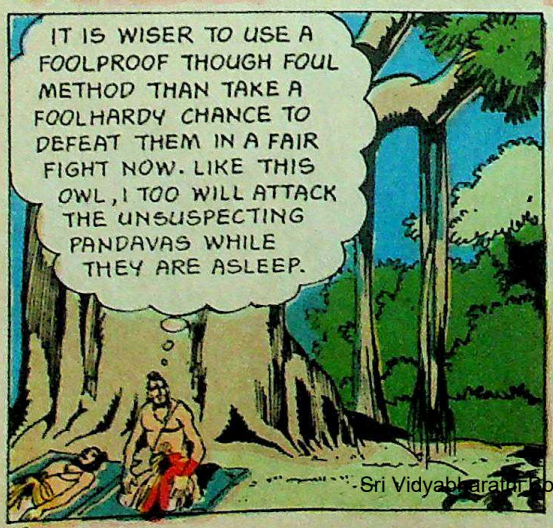
"HE SWEPT DOWN ON THE SLEEPING CROWS AND ATTACKED THEM WITHOUT MERCY.

"IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS, THE PLACE WAS STREWN WITH THE REMAINS OF A MYRIAD CROWS. THE OWL SEEMED PLEASED WITH HIMSELF.

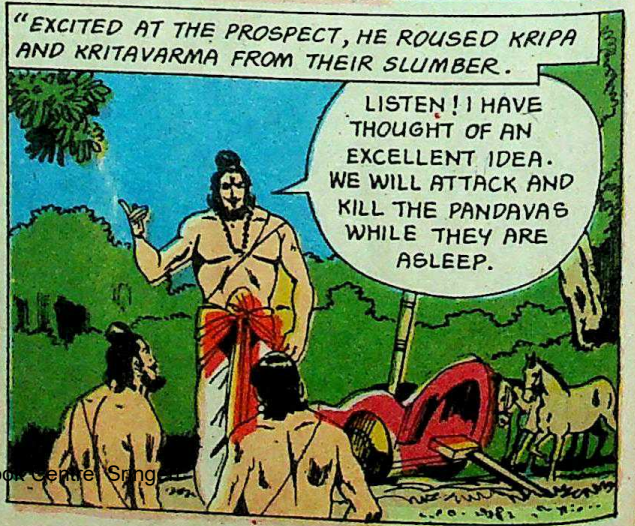


"WATCHING THIS FROM BELOW, AN IDEA TOOK ROOT IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND.





"EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT, HE ROUSED KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA FROM THEIR SLUMBER.



Sri Vidyabharati Book Centre, Sringeri

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"HORRIFIED AT HIS SUGGESTION, THEY GAZED AT HIM SPEECHLESS WITH SHOCK. ASHWATTHAMA SAID—

A MIGHTY RULER OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS LIES IN THE DUST. ONLY THREE OF US NOW REMAIN FROM THAT ARMY. WHAT DO YOU THINK WE CAN DO NOW TO SET MATTERS RIGHT?

"KRIPACHARYA TRIED TO COUNSEL THE EXCITED ASHWATTHAMA.

VALOUR AND VIRTUE ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL FOR A MAN. IT IS FUTILE MERELY TO THINK OF A GOOD DEED WITHOUT TAKING ANY ACTION. IT IS EQUALLY FOOLISH TO PLUNGE INTO ACTIVITY WITHOUT ANY CONSIDERATION OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

DURYODHANA WAS GREEDY AND ILL-ADVISED. CRUEL AND IMPATIENT, HE REFUSED TO LISTEN TO WELL-MEANING FRIENDS AND MADE ENEMIES OF THE PANDAVAS. WE FOLLOWED HIM AND HAVE REACHED THIS SORRY STATE.

MY OWN MIND NOW REFUSES TO FUNCTION. LET US NOW GO TO DHRITARASHTRA, GANDHARI AND VIDURA AND SEEK THEIR COUNSEL. THEY WILL SURELY GUIDE US PROPERLY.

"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT DENY THE WISDOM OF THE ACHARYA'S WORDS. YET HE WAS ADAMANT.

EVERYONE OF US FEELS CONVINCED THAT HIS WAY OF THINKING IS THE ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER ONE. I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND AND I WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY.

THE PANDAVAS WILL BE SLEEPING PEACEFULLY WITH THEIR ARMOURS CAST OFF. ONLY AFTER I HAVE KILLED ALL OF THEM WILL I FEEL I HAVE AVENGED THE DEATH OF MY FATHER.

Sri Vidya Bharathi Book Centre, Srirangam

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"KRIPACHARYA SAID —

YOU SEEM TO HAVE MADE UP YOUR MIND. BUT, ANYWAY, SLEEP AWHILE AND REST YOURSELF. TOMORROW MORNING WE WILL BOTH COME WITH YOU TO ATTACK THE PANDAVAS. YOU WILL FEEL REFRESHED AFTER SOME REST.

"ASHWATTHAMA SAW THROUGH THE ACHARYA'S GENTLE PERSUASION. HE SHOUTED —

HOW CAN A MAN FILLED WITH ANXIETY, SORROW, ANGER OR DESIRE SLEEP? I AM TROUBLED BY ALL OF THESE. I CANNOT CONTROL MYSELF NOW. I WILL REST ONLY AFTER GETTING RID OF ALL THE ENEMIES.

"WHEN ASHWATTHAMA BEGAN TO HARNESS THE HORSES TO HIS CHARIOT, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA TOO GOT UP.

WAIT! ASHWATTHAMA, WE TOO WILL COME WITH YOU.

THEN HURRY UP. DON YOUR ARMOUR AND TAKE UP YOUR WEAPONS.

"THE THREE OF THEM PROCEEDED TO THE PANDAVA CAMP.

"ASHWATTHAMA WHISPERED TO HIS COMPANIONS —

YOU GUARD THE GATE OF THE CAMP. I WILL ENTER THE CAMP NOW AND CREATE HAVOC. YOU TWO MAKE SURE NO ONE ESCAPES.

"AT THE GATE OF THE CAMP, A STRANGE SIGHT MET THEIR EYES. AN ENORMOUS MONSTER LOOMED LARGE IN THEIR PATH.

Sri Vanyabharathi Book Centre, Singapore

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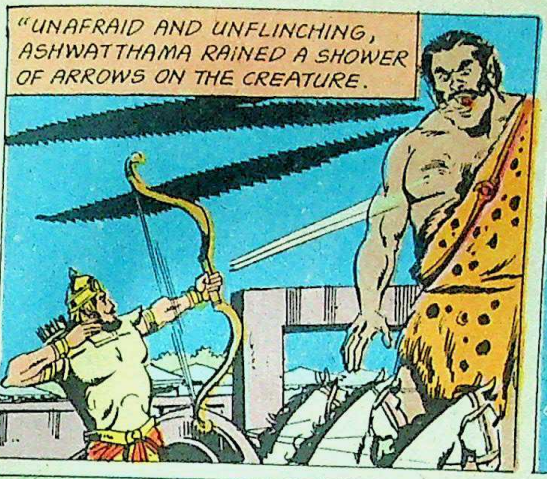

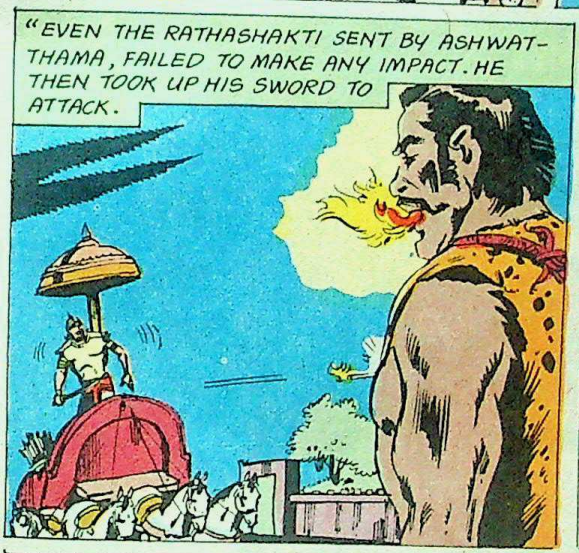

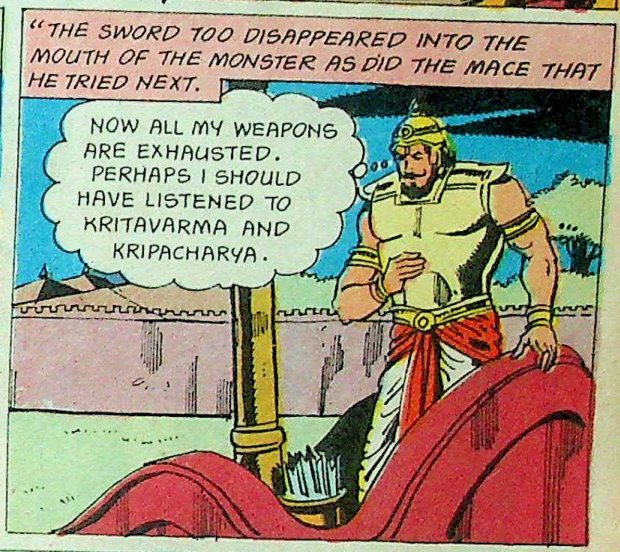

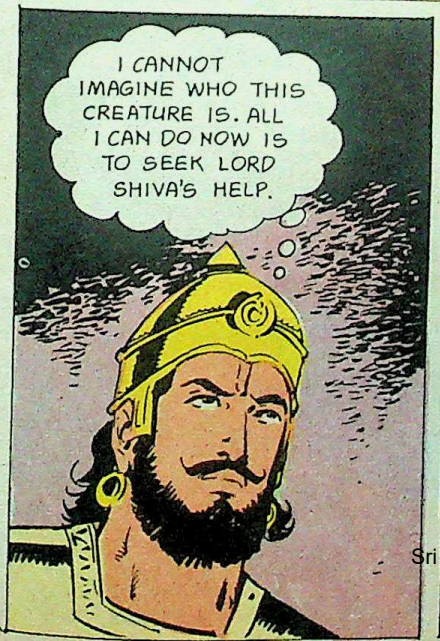

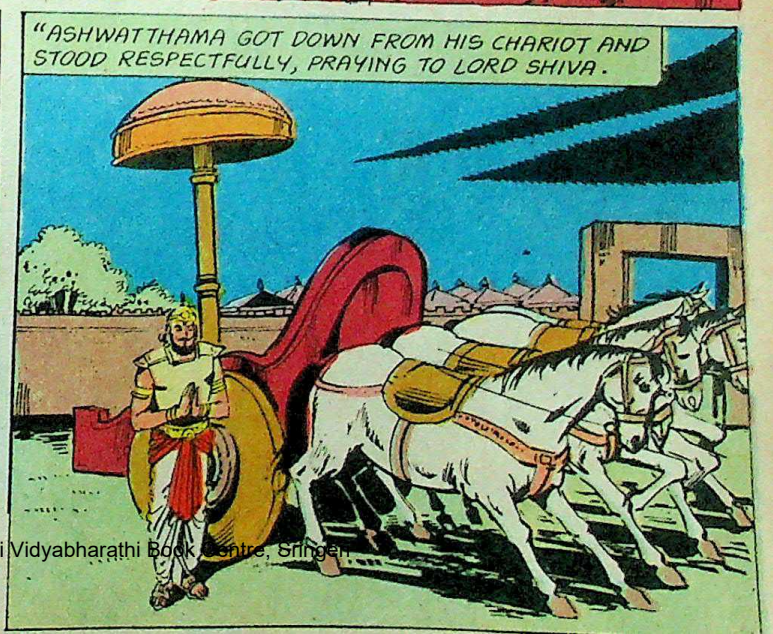

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"WHEN HE MEDITATED FOR A WHILE, A GOLDEN ALTAR APPEARED BEFORE HIM. FROM IT EMERGED HUGE BEINGS WITH STRANGE FEATURES AND GROTESQUE LIMBS.

"THE GHASTLY CREATURES WHO DANCED AND ROMPED BEFORE HIM WERE ACTUALLY ATTENDANTS OF LORD SHIVA.

"REALISING THIS, ASHWATTHAMA CLIMBED INTO THE BLAZING ALTAR.

O LORD, I MAKE AN OFFERING OF MYSELF TO YOU. PLEASE ACCEPT MY GIFT.

"LORD SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE HIM, AND SAID WITH A LAUGH—

I WAS PROTECTING THE PANCHALAS FOR THE SAKE OF MY FAVOURITE DEVOTEE KRISHNA. BUT NOW THEIR LIFE IS AT AN END. HERE, TAKE THIS DAGGER.

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"ASHWATTHAMA WENT STRAIGHT TO DHRISHTADYUMNA'S TENT.

" WITH A SWIFT KICK, ASHWATTHAMA ROUSED THE SLEEPING DHRISHTADYUMNA.

" HE WOKE UP WITH A START AND TRIED TO GET UP. ASHWATTHAMA PULLED HIM BY THE HAIR AND THREW HIM DOWN ON THE FLOOR.

"ASHWATTHAMA PRESSED DHRISHTADYUMNA DOWN WITH HIS FEET AND BEGAN TO RAIN BLOWS ON HIM.

AHHH! KILL ME WITH AN ARROW. LET ME DIE LIKE A A KSHATRIYA.

"HE LAUGHED CRUELLY AS HE STOMPED OVER DHRISHTADYUMNA.

YOU WRETCHED MURDERER OF YOUR GURU, YOU DO NOT DESERVE A HERO'S DEATH.

" THUS, AFTER KICKING AND CRUSHING DHRISHTADYUMNA TO DEATH, ASHWATTHAMA BEGAN ATTACKING THE OTHER WARRIORS.

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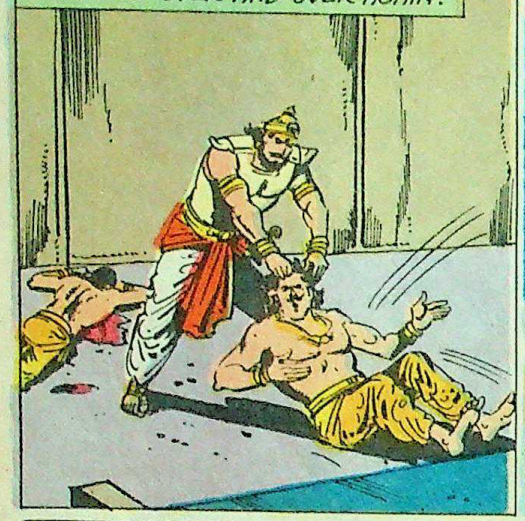
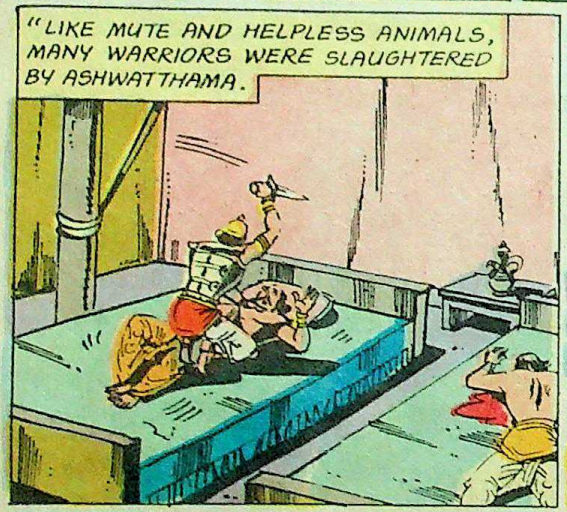
"THE SAME CRUEL PROCESS WAS REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN.



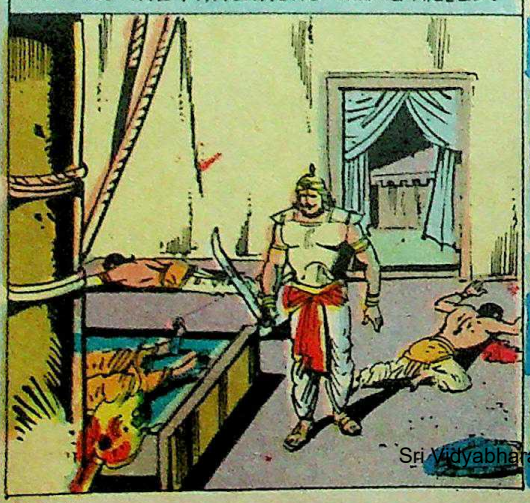
"THE CRY OF THE VICTIMS WOKE UP THE GUARDS AND THE WOMENFOLK. THEY SCREAMED ALOUD.

"LIKE MUTE AND HELPLESS ANIMALS, MANY WARRIORS WERE SLAUGHTERED BY ASHWATTHAMA.

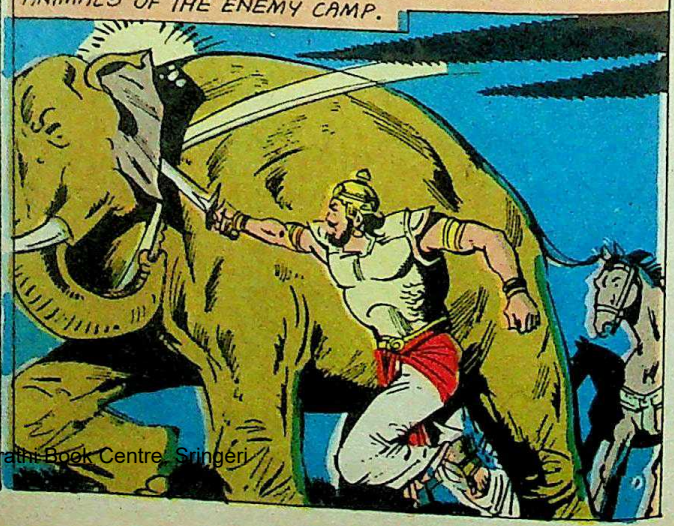


"SOON SHIKHANDI AND THE OTHER WARRIORS, WHO HAD EARLIER ESCAPED THE MIGHTY BATTLE UNSCATHED, WERE KILLED WHILE STILL HALF ASLEEP.

"ONE BY ONE, ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI AND ALL THE PANCHALAS WERE KILLED.



"IN HIS FURY, ASHWATTHAMA ATTACKED EVEN THE ANIMALS OF THE ENEMY CAMP.



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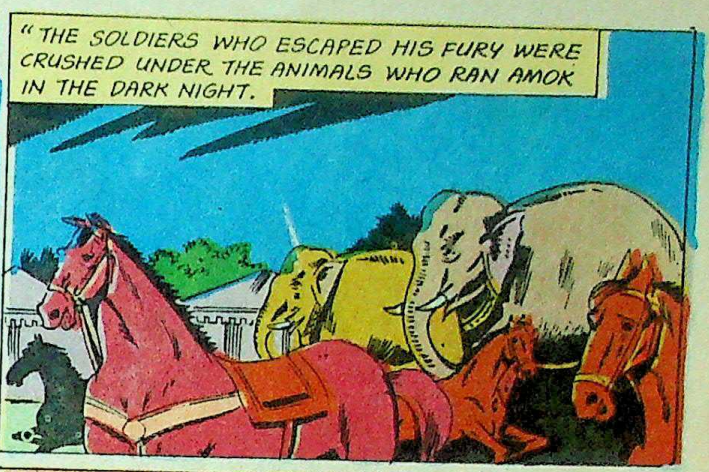

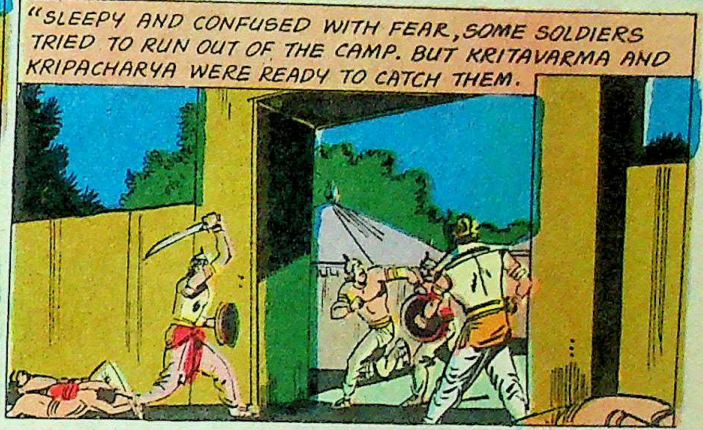

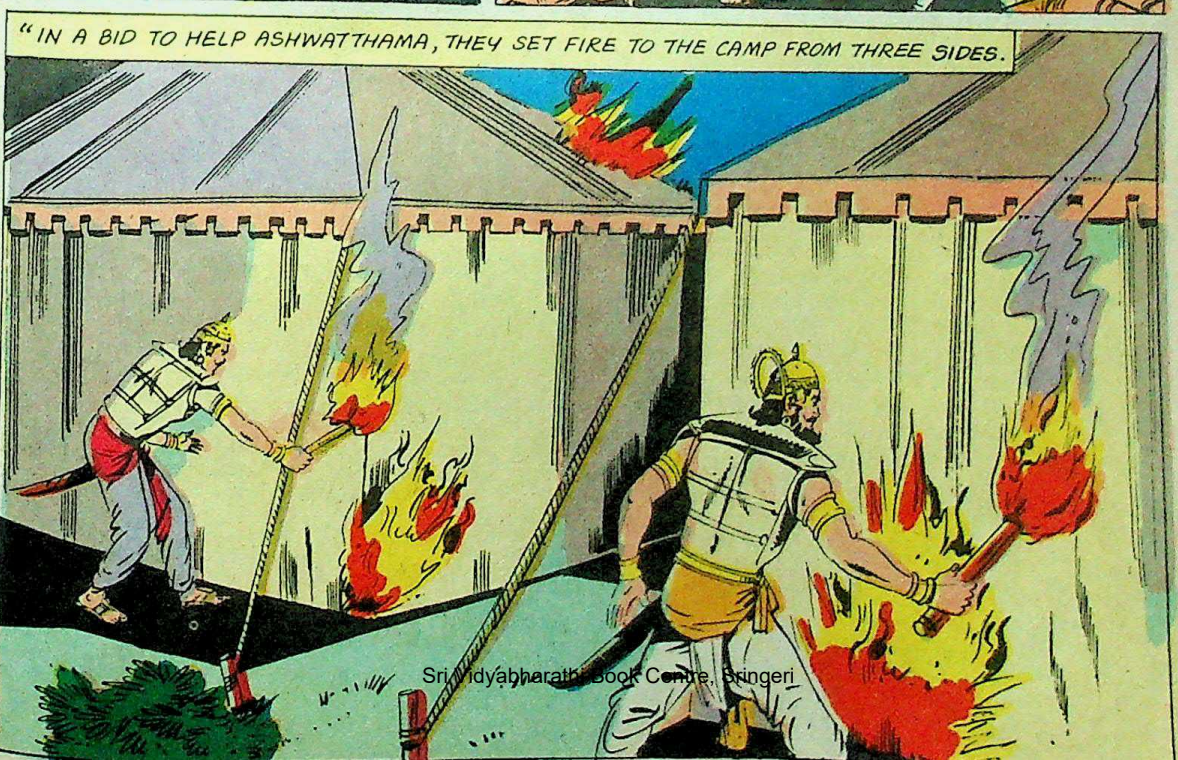

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"IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF THE RAGING FIRE ASHWATTHAMA MANAGED TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE ARMY...

"...SO THAT WHEN HE EMERGED AT DAYBREAK AFTER THE MASSACRE, THE CAMP LAY AS SILENT AS IT HAD BEEN WHEN HE HAD ENTERED IT EARLIER IN THE NIGHT.

"ASHWATTHAMA, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA PIERCED THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT WITH THEIR CRIES OF REJOICING.

WE HAVE DONE IT! WE HAVE FINISHED OUR TASK.

COME, LET US HURRY TO KING DURYODHANA WITH THE GOOD NEWS.

"WHEN THEY REACHED DURYODHANA, THEY FOUND HIM BARELY BREATHING.

"ASHWATTHAMA WIPED THE BLOOD SPOUTING FROM DURYODHANA'S MOUTH AND SAID —

LISTEN, O KING! ALL THE PANCHALAS AND ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI ARE DEAD. I HAVE KILLED THAT WICKED DHRISHTA-DYUMNA TOO.

NOW ONLY THE FIVE PANDAVAS, KRISHNA AND SATYAKI REMAIN AMONG THE PANDAVAS, AND THE THREE OF US FROM OUR ARMY.

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"THE NEWS REVIVED DURYODHANA LONG ENOUGH TO SAY—

ASHWATTHAMA! YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME WHAT BHEESHMA, DRONA OR KARNA COULD NOT DO. BLESS YOU! NOW WE WILL ALL MEET IN HEAVEN.

"WITH THESE WORDS, DURYODHANA BREATHED HIS LAST. THE MIGHTY WARRIOR WHO HAD BEEN THE FIRST TO ENTER THE BATTLEFIELD WAS AMONG THE LAST TO DIE.

"BRIEFLY EMBRACING THE DEPARTED KING DURYODHANA THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE PLACE.

"VAISHAMPAYANA CONTINUED HIS NARRATION—

WHEN SANJAYA HEARD THE NEWS OF DURYODHANA'S DEATH, HE LOST THE POWER OF THE DIVINE VISION BESTOWED ON HIM BY SAGE VYASA. MEANWHILE, DHRISHTADYUMNA'S CHARIOTEER HAD SOMEHOW ESCAPED THE MASSACRE AND RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH THE TERRIBLE NEWS.

"RELATING THE GRUESOME DETAILS OF THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE, HE SAID—

O KING, I ALONE ESCAPED WHILE YOUR ENTIRE ARMY HAS BEEN DESTROYED.

"YUDHISHTHIRA FAINTED WITH SHOCK. SATYAKI CAUGHT HIM AS HE FELL.

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"ON RECOVERING, YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED ALOUD—

ALAS! I HAVE LOST ALL AFTER WINNING THE WAR. MY WARRIORS WHO HAD ESCAPED THE ARROWS OF THE MIGHTY KARNA AND DRONA HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THEIR OWN CARELESSNESS.

"AFTER SENDING NAKULA TO FETCH DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA SORROWFULLY WENT TO HIS CAMP WITH HIS OTHER BROTHERS.

"HE COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THAT AWFUL SIGHT AND, CRYING INCONSOLABLY FELL DOWN IN A SWOON.

"EVEN AS THE OTHER PANDAVAS TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM, NAKULA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE WITH DRAUPADI.

"AGITATED AS SHE WAS WITH THE NEWS, THE SCENE OF MASSACRE WAS TOO TRAGIC A SIGHT FOR HER. BHEEMA CAUGHT HER JUST IN TIME AS SHE FAINTED.

" WHEN SHE RECOVERED A LITTLE, SHE GLARED AT YUDHISHTHIRA, AND SAID—

SHOULD I CONGRATULATE YOU ON CONQUERING THE EARTH AFTER SACRIFICING YOUR SONS?

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I AM BURNING WITH RAGE AT THIS MONSTROUS ACT. NOW YOU MUST AVENGE OUR DEAR ONES' DEATHS. I SWEAR I WILL NOT MOVE FROM HERE TILL YOU KILL THAT WICKED SON OF DRONA.

"SHE TOOK UP A POSE OF MEDITATION AND SAT DOWN RIGHT THERE ON THE BATTLEFIELD. YUDHISHTHIRA TRIED TO REASON WITH HER.

YOU KNOW THAT YOUR BROTHERS AND SONS HAVE DIED LIKE HEROES ON THE BATTLEFIELD. NOW ASHWATTHAMA HAS ESCAPED INTO THE FOREST.

EVEN IF WE DO MANAGE TO KILL HIM, HOW WILL WE CONVINCE YOU OF HIS DEATH ?

I KNOW THAT ASHWATTHAMA HAS A JEWEL ON HIS HEAD. BRING IT TO ME.

"TURNING TO BHEEMA, SHE SAID —

BHEEMA DEAR, I KNOW YOU ARE THE BRAVEST OF MEN. DO THIS FAVOUR FOR ME.

INDEED I WILL.

"AT ONCE BHEEMA MOUNTED HIS CHARIOT AND, WITH NAKULA AS HIS CHARIOTEER, SET OUT TO FOLLOW ASHWATTHAMA'S TRAIL.

"WHEN THEY LEFT, KRISHNA SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA —

IT IS NOT SAFE TO LET BHEEMA GO ALONE. ASHWATTHAMA HAS IN HIS POSSESSION A POWERFUL WEAPON CALLED BRAHMASHIRA* WHICH CAN SET THE WORLD AFLAME.

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* CELESTIAL WEAPON

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DRONA HAD FIRST BESTOWED THIS WEAPON ON ARJUNA. ASHWATTHAMA PERSUADED HIS FATHER TO GIVE IT TO HIM TOO. I KNOW THAT ASHWATTHAMA CAN BE VERY DEVIOUS, CUNNING AND WILL STOP AT NOTHING. WHY, HE EVEN TRIED TO FLATTER ME TO GIVE HIM MY CHAKRA ONCE. WE MUST PROTECT BHEEMA NOW.

"KRISHNA ASCENDED HIS CHARIOT TAKING ARJUNA AND YUDHISHTHIRA WITH HIM.

"THE CHARIOT FLEW THROUGH THE AIR AND REACHED BHEEMA IN A MATTER OF MOMENTS.

"THEY FOUND ASHWATTHAMA CLAD IN BARK, SITTING AMIDST VYASA AND OTHER SAGES, ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER GANGA.

"BHEEMA RAN UP TO HIM WITH HIS BOW AND ARROW.

COME ON NOW! ARISE AND FIGHT.

"ASHWATTHAMA PICKED UP A BLADE OF GRASS AND MEDITATED ON THE CELESTIAL WEAPON.

MAY THIS WEAPON DESTROY ALL THE PANDAVAS.

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"NO SOONER HAD HE SAID THIS THAN ENORMOUS FLAMES BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM THAT BLADE OF GRASS.

"KRISHNA HAD READ ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. HE SAID TO ARJUNA —

YOU TOO RECEIVED THIS WEAPON FROM DRONA. NOW IS THE TIME TO USE IT.

"JUMPING DOWN FROM THE CHARIOT, ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROW.

MAY THIS WEAPON COUNTER ASHWAT-THAMA'S WEAPON.

"THE ENTIRE WORLD APPEARED TO SHAKE AND TREMBLE WITH THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS.

"JUST THEN, THE SAGES VYASA AND NARADA, GOT UP AND STOOD BETWEEN ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA.

NO ONE IN THE PAST HAS EVER DARED TO USE THIS WEAPON ON HUMAN BEINGS. HOW COULD BOTH OF YOU DO SO?

"ARJUNA SAID —

I USED IT TO COUNTER ASHWATTHAMA'S ATTACK. NOW I WILL CERTAINLY DO AS YOU SAY. I WILL TRY MY BEST TO RECALL IT.

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"IT WAS NOT AN EASY WEAPON TO RECALL. HAVING OBTAINED IT AFTER SEVERE AUSTERITIES, ARJUNA HAD THE POWER AND ABILITY TO WITHDRAW IT.

"ASHWATTHAMA HOWEVER COULD NOT DO SO, MUCH AS HE TRIED. HE APPEALED TO VYASA.

I USED THIS WEAPON IN FEAR OF BHEEMA, SAYING, NOW MAY ALL PANDAVAS BE DESTROYED. BUT NOW I CANNOT WITHDRAW IT.

"SAGE VYASA SAID TO ASHWATTHAMA—

DO YOU KNOW THAT THE LAND WHERE SUCH TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS CLASH REMAINS RAINLESS AND PARCHED FOR TWELVE YEARS? THAT IS WHY ARJUNA DID NOT TRY TO DESTROY YOUR WEAPON.

THE PANDAVAS DO NOT WANT TO WIN BY UNFAIR MEANS. NOW TO COMPENSATE FOR YOUR WICKED ACT, GIVE THEM THE JEWEL FROM YOUR HEAD, AND ALSO RECALL YOUR WEAPON.

"ASHWATTHAMA REPLIED—

OH! THIS GEM IS MOST PRECIOUS TO ME. BUT I WILL GIVE IT UP IN DEFERENCE TO YOUR WISHES.

AS FOR THE WEAPON, I CANNOT RECALL IT. LET ITS EFFECT BE DIRECTED TO THE FUTURE PROGENY OF THE PANDAVAS IF NOT TO THEM.

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"MEANWHILE, THE OLD KING DHRITARASHTRA WAS PLUNGED IN DEEP SORROW. SANJAYA SAID TO HIM—

WHY DO YOU GRIEVE SO? NOW THERE IS NO ONE LEFT TO CONSOLE YOU.

YES, INDEED I HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR.

"DHRITARASHTRA THREW HIMSELF DOWN ON THE FLOOR. THE WISE VIDURA TRIED TO PACIFY HIM—

COMPOSE YOURSELF, O KING! WHY DO YOU GRIEVE OVER YOUR SONS WHO DIED LIKE HEROES?

HE SPOKE TO HIM SOOTHINGLY AND PERSUADED DHRITARASHTRA TO SHED HIS SORROW AND COMPOSE HIMSELF TO FACE THE FUTURE.

THUS ENDS THE THIRTY-NINTH CHAPTER OF OUR RENDERING OF VYASA'S ITIHASA MAHABHARATA.

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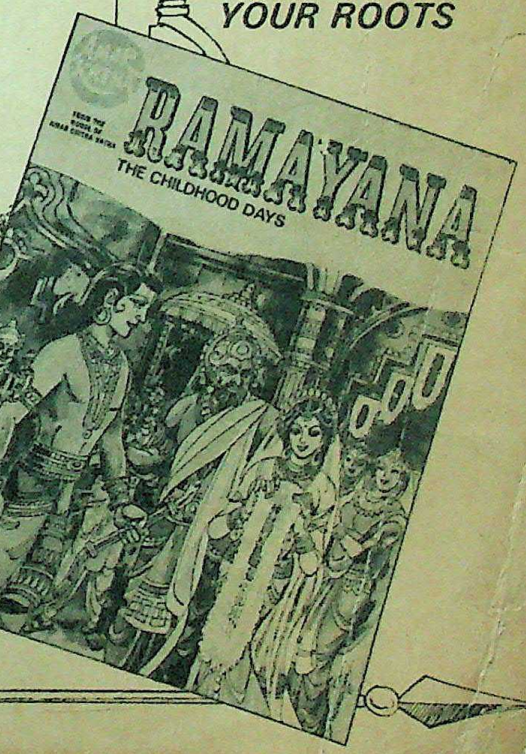

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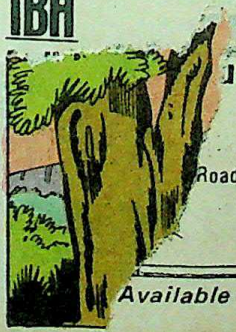

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